

# CLASSIC POP

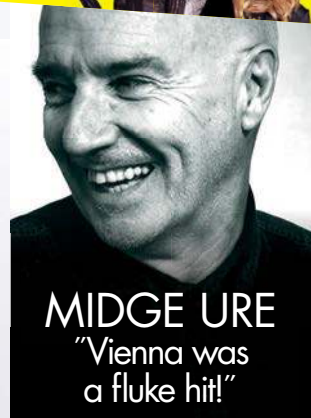
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Much more...



# Madonna

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# WELCOME TO CLASSIC POP

WE LIKE TO DO THINGS A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY HERE AT CLASSIC POP, SO WHILE ALL OUR RIVALS ARE DEVOTING VAST SWATHES OF THEIR MAGAZINES TO LOOKING BACK AT THE YEAR THAT'S ALREADY DONE AND DUSTED, WE'RE COCKING A SNOOK AT SUCH TRADITIONALISM AND ALREADY BRAVELY STRIDING INTO THE FUTURE AND EAGERLY AWAITING WHAT LIES AHEAD IN 2019.

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**T**he musical highlight for many will no doubt be the return of Madonna. It's been a high-achieving journey by the woman who 40 years ago joined French disco artist Patrick Hernandez on a world tour as a backing singer and dancer. The vast majority of those years have found Ms Ciccone blazing a trail as a pre-eminent figure in pop culture worldwide.

Our cover feature this month looks forward to Madonna's hotly-anticipated new 2019 studio album, including what influence her adopted home country of Portugal has on proceedings as well as the return of producer Mirwais.

We also consider how six facets of Madonna's personality have helped sustain her cultural importance over the past four decades. From her long-standing political activism, loyal support of gay rights to her fearless musical and visual innovation and more, Mark Lindores gets to grips with just what makes the Queen of Pop such a fascinating figure.

And talking of fearlessly outspoken singers, let me point you in the direction of a typically outrageous catch-up this month in our pages with Ian McCulloch. The endlessly entertaining Echo & The Bunnymen frontman is every music journalist's dream interviewee

– virtually everything he utters is eminently quotable – and once again Mac the Mouth doesn't disappoint. The faint-hearted should look away now.

Equally quotable is Paul Heaton, vying with Madonna for a place in pop's royal court. One of the UK's greatest songwriters is on dazzling form for CP this month and even gives our writer John Earls some fruit for the journey homeward. How considerate is that? You wouldn't get that from Justin Bieber.

I may have exaggerated in my intro when I said there's no looking back for us this issue. Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without our essential pick of the best new albums, reissues, compilations and books of the year. You didn't really think we'd let you down did you? If you're short on present ideas, we've got a bunch of essential purchases for any lover of great music.

That just leaves me to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

Enjoy the issue!

**Steve Harnell, Editor**



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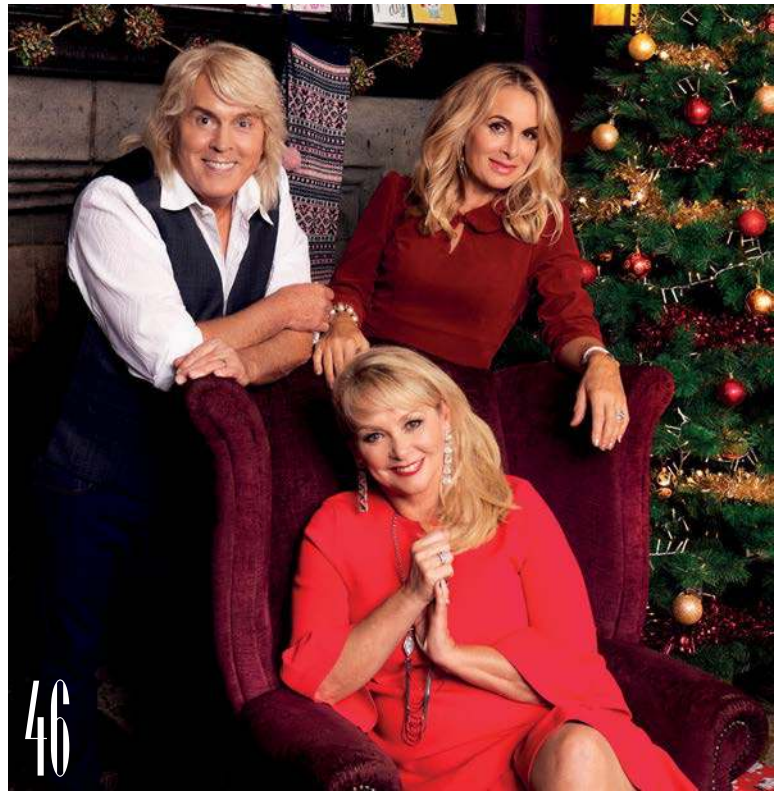
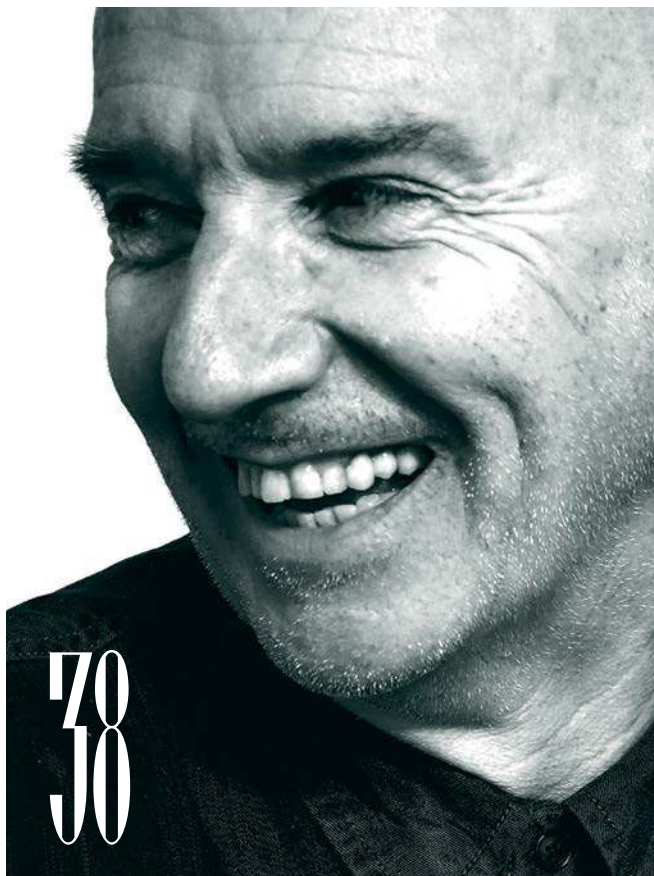
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# THE BEST OF 2018



## GODMOTHERS OF POP

Dollar's Thereza Bazar

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# CLASSIC POP

## WHO'S WHO

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**Johnny Black**

Meditations I-II-III – FOXTROTT \*6

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Golden – KYLIE MINOGUE

**Douglas McPherson**

Blood Red Roses – ROD STEWART \*7

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Ismism – GODLEY & CREME

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### SOUNDBITES

\*1 "The former Smiths songwriter that it's still OK to like."

\*2 "Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill returned with 41 minutes of atmospheric synth-laden pop-rock. The epic six minute-long *Barrowland Star* is as good as anything the band have recorded in the last 40 years."

\*3 "Jaunty, clever, sexy, retro-flavoured indie-pop."

\*4 "Finally, someone for whom the tag 'The new Prince' might actually be justified."

\*5 "She's so 21st century that it hurts, but her audacious brio and musical adventurousness are 80s redux in the best possible way."

\*6 "This Canadian electronic singer-songwriter comes across like a stimulating blend of 80s pioneer Laurie Anderson with Christine And The Queens."

\*7 "A potent mix of personal lyrics and stirring melodies."

\*8 "Keeping the purple funk vibe alive and kicking, with a bit of classic Stevie Wonder thrown in, too."

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**David Burke** is a regular contributor to *Vintage Rock* and *RnR* magazines. He has also written books including *Heart Of Darkness: Bruce*

*Springsteen's Nebraska* and *A Sense of Wonder: Van Morrison's Ireland*.

In this issue, he interviews Echo & The Bunnyman's Ian McCulloch and serves up our *Lowdown* on Bee Gees.



**Wyndham Wallace** is formerly a publicist, label representative and artist manager who has written for *Uncut* and *The Guardian*. His Travis documentary,

*Almost Fashionable*, was selected for the Edinburgh International Film Festival. Wyndham helps our new albums section, dissecting efforts from Trevor Horn, Joe Jackson, Steve Mason and Maggie Rogers.



**Mark Lindores** grew up during the golden age of pop mags, devouring *Smash Hits* and *Number One*. He now writes about the artists he used to read about for

*Classic Pop*, *Total Film* and *Mixmag*. As well as reviewing the best new books and music documentaries this month, Mark writes our Madonna cover feature and also looks in depth at her classic album, *Like A Prayer*.

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# POP UP

## Is Numan's anti-nostalgia principle cracking?

He's not normally one for looking back but Gary Numan is planning to raise a glass to some very important anniversaries in 2019. "Next year is the 40th of my first two big albums, it's quite a big deal," says Gary, referring to *Replicas* and *The Pleasure Principle* LPs. "If I'm going to do any retrospective career thing that's the best time to do it because there's a justification for it, a reason for doing it."

Numan's creative drive is such that he prefers exploring new projects. "I don't like nostalgia, I just don't. If you still have an ongoing and active career then you're keen on what you're doing now and what you're doing next, I'm not particularly interested in what I've done in the past. When you're out on stage doing new stuff it feels exciting. It's where you're at as a person at that particular time, emotionally."

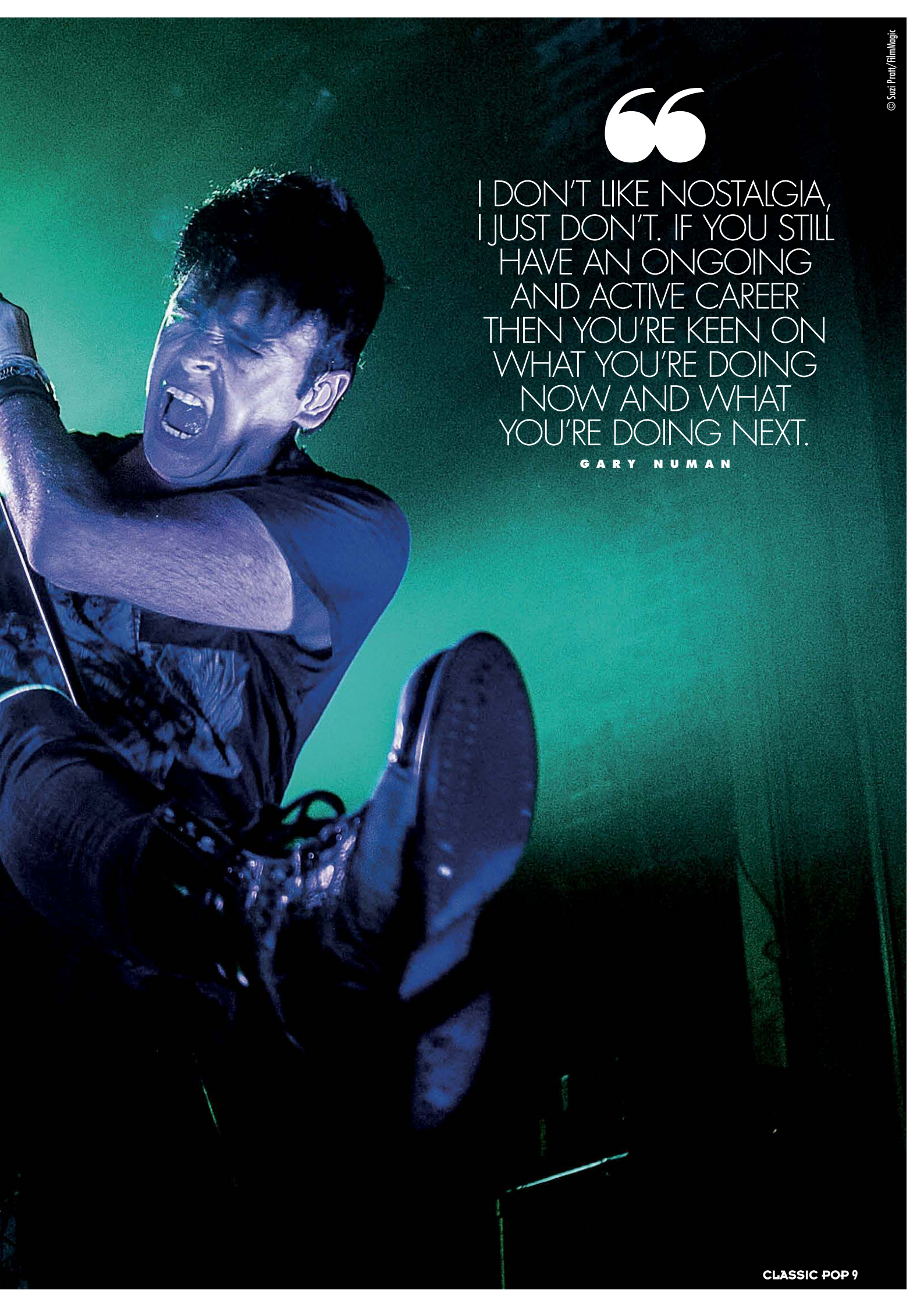
He recently issued a live album, but it's always a struggle including

the old songs. "Constantly playing stuff that you've performed many, many times can become tedious, stuff that you wrote when you were 19 and 20," he says. "You don't think or feel that way any more, you don't really want to be doing all that stuff repeatedly – it feels like you're standing still."

"I got into the music business because I'm creative by nature, I like to write great things and that's never stopped. So it's unrealistic to expect people like me to stay stuck in the past and keep playing the same old songs. It doesn't hold a lot of interest for me. I'm massively obsessed about what I'm going to do next and have no interest in what I did yesterday, it's gone. I'm a forward-thinking person. Nostalgia doesn't work for me. But it's a constant battle because there are people who'd like you to stay the same playing the songs that they grew up with forever."







“

I DON'T LIKE NOSTALGIA,  
I JUST DON'T. IF YOU STILL  
HAVE AN ONGOING  
AND ACTIVE CAREER  
THEN YOU'RE KEEN ON  
WHAT YOU'RE DOING  
NOW AND WHAT  
YOU'RE DOING NEXT.

GARY NUMAN





## No.48

### MOVE CLOSER PHYLLIS NELSON

Phyllis Nelson was an experienced disco singer and her 1985 single *Move Closer* was a radical departure into all-out soulful schmaltz that clambered slowly but purposefully to No.1 for a single week.

Sung from the point of view of an older woman in a relationship, it was unashamedly soppy and romantically graphic. Nevertheless it had the desired effect on many a young – and, indeed, less young – couple planning on some nonsense in a dark room.

Nelson, from Florida, had made disco records to minimal effect in the 70s but was well-regarded as a session singer around the Philly soul scene. After getting divorced and beginning a relationship with a much younger man, she wrote *Move Closer*.

Not many records entering the charts at No.90 can hope to end up at No.1, but *Move Closer* did. It climbed for 12 consecutive weeks until it hit the top for a solitary week in May 1985. It spent 10 weeks in the Top 10 in total and nearly six months on the chart – only six songs outsold it that year.

A follow-up, *I Like You*, reached No.81, and *Move Closer* re-charted in 1994 after use on a deodorant advert. Phyllis Nelson died of breast cancer in 1998, aged 47.

Matthew Rudd is the host of  
Forgotten 80s on Absolute 80s



### ALBARN'S DIVORCE LETTER TO ENGLAND

Damon Albarn was as giddy as a teenager to be working with David Bowie producer Tony Visconti earlier this year. The pair produced *Merrie Land*, the latest LP by The Good, The Bad & The Queen. Albarn explains: "It was a privilege to work together. I had a million things I wanted to ask him about David Bowie, but at the same time I didn't want to bombard him with questions."

*Merrie Land* was the culmination of two troubled Brexit years. "Each note and every word is linked to the resentment that has accumulated in me since the Brexit vote," admits Albarn. "It's clearly not good living in England right now. Writing this album, it was like a letter of divorce with my own country."



## Duran go back to collage

Duran Duran have belatedly shot a video for a three-decades-old song. *The Edge Of America* appeared on the band's 1988 album, *Big Thing* and to mark its 30th anniversary they have created a short film on the subject of migration. Colombian-Venezuelan media artist David Medina is behind the collage-style video depicting a clash between nature and culture, interweaving people from diverse ethnic backgrounds with flocks of birds. "More than a billion birds die crashing with windows and aircrafts in the US every year," Medina says. "More than 110 million people have been apprehended, returned or deported from the US border since 1988."

Duran keyboardist Nick Rhodes has long been a fan of Medina's work. "Although we had radically different backgrounds and life experiences, somehow we were both inspired by the idea of collaborating," he reveals. "So I started to think about a specific Duran Duran track that might lend itself to a collection of unexpected visuals created through algorithms. The video that David has created is a gaze at humanity which expresses compassion [and] empathy, that is so sadly lacking in much of our world at this time. I instantly realised that this was the right piece of music for David to work on and, at the same time, I was confounded that it felt more prescient now than it did when we recorded it."

## Computer world of OMD

**O**rchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark could never have made their 40th anniversary without Kraftwerk. Andy McCluskey admits they owe the German robots their career. "The thing that Kraftwerk taught us when we were teenagers was that you can actually have intellectual content in your music, challenging sounds and still having melody and musicality. That's what we have always tried to do," he said. "Plus, we don't judge ourselves by sales or chart positions. We never would have started the band had that been our primary drive. It was an utterly bonkers idea – two guys and a tape recorder with a crazy name playing German-inspired synth music in a Liverpool new wave club."

OMD earned rave reviews for another sell-out UK tour in 2018 and hit the road again in January for a US and South American jaunt. "We've toured a lot in the last few years and the great thing is when we play new material it does fit in and the audience don't start fidgeting or going to the toilet or bar."

The key to their longevity is taking plenty of time off. McCluskey told the *Chronicle Live*: "If you're lucky enough to be successful and liked, it can take your life over. When you are our age, and are parents and have partners and kids, you don't really want to be away for eight months and not see the people that you love. You have to strike a balance. What was interesting was, by taking time off [this year] and stepping back and spending time with the people we love, smelling the roses, going for walks and visiting art galleries, not only did we make sure we stayed connected with those that we loved, but the well of inspiration had time to refill slowly. So we had a lot of interesting ideas to try when we started to write music again."



### THE SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR ORBITAL COLLABORATION

Techno duo Orbital have landed a very famous third member, Professor Brian Cox. The physicist, who was once a musician himself in the band D:Ream, is the guest star on the Hartnoll brothers' new remix, *There Will Come A Time (We Will Die Remix)*. Explaining the unlikely collab, Paul Hartnoll said: "Brian says – 'One day we will die!'"

Who are we to disagree? So we didn't waste any time making this pumped-up mix to take us to the end of our world!"



### APP-ROPRIATE BOWIE BIRTHDAY GIFT

David Bowie's annual birthday gift to fans continues with the release of an augmented reality mobile app next year. On 8 January, to mark what would have been the late singer's 72nd birthday, the record-breaking *David Bowie Is* V&A exhibition is being immortalised digitally in app form. The entire touring exhibit featuring the singer's costumes, photographs, sketches and memorabilia has been filmed in 3D by New York-based studio Planeta who developed the AR/VR interpretations of the original museum experience. Additionally, the *David Bowie Is* mobile app will feature dozens of items not featured in the original exhibition. The app will be available in seven different languages on iOS and Android.





# POP QUIZ

- 1 Who directed the classic video for Madonna's *Express Yourself*?
- 2 Midge Ure was in Rich Kids with which former Sex Pistol?
- 3 What was the name of Bronski Beat's 1986 follow-up to *The Age Of Consent* LP?
- 4 Bee Gees wrote *Chain Reaction* for which soul star?
- 5 Can you name the two Beautiful South studio albums that topped the UK charts?
- 6 Which lyricist links Bucks Fizz, Five Star and King Crimson?
- 7 Name the swaggering singer who provides backing vocals for Echo & The Bunnymen's *Nothing Lasts Forever*.
- 8 Who plays keyboards on Foreigner's *I Want To Know What Love Is*?
- 9 Name the acclaimed album released by Janelle Monáe earlier this year.
- 10 Which band have just returned under the new name of Los Unidados?
- 11 The Trevor Horn Band was formerly known under what moniker?
- 12 Name Thereza Bazar's debut solo album.
- 13 Who was Transvision Vamp's songwriter and guitarist?
- 14 *The Edge Of America* appeared on which Duran Duran album?
- 15 Which stargazer appears on the new Orbital album?

## HOW DID YOU DO?

13-15 Hot Stuff

10-12 More, More, More

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## TEARS FOR FEARS GET PALATIAL

Tears For Fears will make up for lost time with two more special live dates next summer. The duo, who postponed this year's arena tour due to health reasons, will play two gigs at the Hampton Court Palace Festival 2019. Roland Orzabal and Curt Smith hit Henry VIII's old stomping ground on 18 and 19 June. There may even be a long-mooted new TFF studio album by then. In the meantime, Roland has been clearing out his garage. More than 30 flight cases containing equipment, instruments and clothing from the band's 1996 tour went on sale in December having been cleared from Roland's home. Tears For Fears kick off a busy 2019 of touring at the INEC in Killarney, Ireland, on 30 January.



## Cyndi glad she's Kinky

Cyndi Lauper continues to win rave reviews and awards for her musical *Kinky Boots*, but spent years avoiding the theatre. "I was always being beckoned, 'Come this way,'" she recalls. "And I was like, 'I can't, because if I do, my career is over, I would lose my credibility in pop.' It was really a big divide. After a while you get to a point where you're, 'Well, I think I've been ruined enough, it doesn't matter now, I can do whatever the hell I want.'"

Lauper was originally planning to make a musical about her own childhood when she got a call from her friend and theatre royalty, Harvey Fierstein. "He said, 'I'm doing a show called *Kinky Boots*. Would you like to write the music for me?'. He told me I had to watch the film. I loved it. I thought, oh, I get it, he wants me to write 12 good pop songs with a good hook. I figured, I could do that. Then I realised, 'oh, you have to move the story along.'"

Although the play is set in the UK, she didn't need to adapt her songwriting style. She told the *Lancashire Telegraph*: "When England started doing pop music it sounded like American music. Their translation of Duane Eddy, The Everly Brothers and Chuck Berry was the Mersey Beat. It was different, but still based on rhythm and blues. It wasn't like Harvey asked me to write some foreign stuff. You're not going to ask me to write an opera. I don't study opera."

● ***Kinky Boots* visits Edinburgh Playhouse until 5 January and then travels around the UK**

ANSWERS 1 David Fincher; 2 Glen Matlock; 3 Truthdare Doubleclare; 4 Diana Ross; 5 Blue Is The Colour and Quench; 6 Pete Sinfield; 7 Liam Gallagher; 8 Tim Bailey; 9 Dirty Computer; 10 Coldplay; 11 The Producers; 12 The Big Kiss; 13 Nick Christian Sayer; 14 Big Thing; 15 Professor Brian Cox



## Movie beckons for Take That

Take That will start work on a new feature film after toasting their 30th anniversary. The 90s pop greats tour the UK from next April, then focus on a movie version of their hit musical, *The Band*. "We're going to make a film of our musical next year, we are all signed off on that now," confirmed Gary Barlow. "Tim Firth is doing the film script and we are going to shoot next summer. Again, we can get involved with the music and that will keep us busy after the tour next year." The stage show of *The Band* will travel overseas next year as well. Gary added: "We've had offers from Canada, Australia and Germany." The trio's new hits album *Odyssey*, featuring reworked versions of classic songs became one of the fastest-selling LPs of the year. It's been a revelation for Howard Donald who said: "*Love Ain't Here Anymore* wasn't particularly my favourite in the 90s but that has got some guest vocals now [by Boyz II Men], that's really turned it round on its head and I enjoy it now."

● **The Odyssey Tour kicks off  
in Sheffield on 12 April**

### CURRIE'S VINYL FAVOUR

Del Amitri frontman Justin Currie is revisiting his early solo work on vinyl. The singer's debut album, *What Is Love For* – originally released in 2007 – is now available on vinyl for the very first time, having been released on 7 December. "To have made five or six albums since 1997, none of which appeared on vinyl, was starting to make me feel like a fake," he explains. "Since receiving the test pressings for *What Is Love For*, I have been incredibly excited that this odd situation was finally being rectified. Something happens to acoustic-based music in the analogue domain that renders it somehow more alive."

The process has given the songs a new lease of life, he believes. "There are a number of tracks on this album that suddenly come alive in a way they never did on CD. It's been an enormous relief to hear that rumble and fizz around the music that producer and mixer Mark Freegard and I always imagined as we were making it."



## Belinda Carlisle

**RUNAWAY HORSES  
30TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR**

**SEPTEMBER 2019**

**21 GATESHEAD SAGE**

**22 GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL**

**24 YORK BARBICAN**

**25 NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL**

**27 LONDON PALLADIUM**

**29 WREXHAM WILLIAM ASTON HALL**

**30 CARDIFF ST DAVID'S HALL**

**OCTOBER 2019**

**02 NORWICH UEA**

**03 BEXHILL DE LA WARR PAVILION**

**05 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 1**

**06 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL**

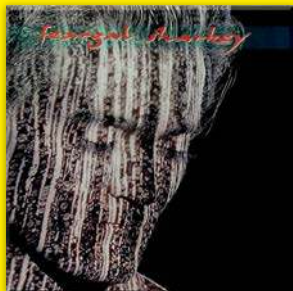
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# LOST & FOUND



## No.48

### FEARGAL SHARKEY

FEARGAL SHARKEY

*A Good Heart* and *You Little Thief* were tremendous pop songs that rubberstamped the uniqueness of Feargal Sharkey, who at the time of his first solo album, had a voice and image quite unlike any contemporary.

The listener is prepped for a lavish 35 minutes of adult pop goodness, with third single *Someone To Somebody* giving Sharkey's raucous vocals a pleading quality while he rages like a spotty Derry punk elsewhere on brass-drizzled pieces like *Ghost Train*.

The highest note from the incomparable Sharkey pipes comes at the beginning of the swing pop beauty *Love And Hate*, which nods towards R&B standard *Fever*. *Ashes And Diamonds* rips through the speakers with joy and confidence, and has some terrific vocal swaps with the backing singers. *Bitter Man* has a bouncy piano and makes good use of the studio's echo effects while a brash harmonica heralds the menacing *Don't Leave It To Nature*. Chrissie Hynde's brief blues ballad *Made To Measure* is out of sync with the remainder of the album and excellent for it, but the album closes with an unnecessary cover of *It's All Over Now* that would not have been missed.

On release, the album peaked at No.12 and was certified gold. Sharkey released two more before going into the business end of the industry.

Matthew Rudd

# POP

### RICK GETS RICKROLLED

Rick Astley found himself rickrolled once again, this time by Disney. Rickrolling, where people trick you into watching Astley's *Never Gonna Give You Up* video, has been an internet gag for years. However, Disney deserve props for managing to do it to the man himself while promoting their new animated movie, *Ralph Breaks The Internet*. Somewhat cruelly, Astley was told he had a part in the cartoon. "I've always wanted to be turned into an animation," the singer said. However, when he went to audition, producers played a clip of lead character Wreck-It Ralph, voiced by John C. Reilly, singing *Never Gonna Give You Up* instead. "I mean, it doesn't look anything like me, does it?" Astley quipped afterwards.



## Baby Spice keeps it in the family

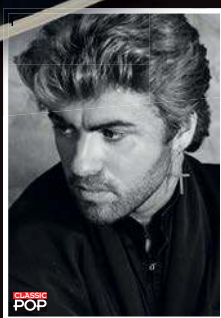
Emma Bunton's first solo album in a decade is a family affair. The artist formerly known as Baby Spice has recruited fiancé Jade Jones of *Damage* fame to help make the music. "Jade, my other half, has been in the studio with me the whole time," Emma explained on her Heart radio show. "He does lots of vocal arrangements – and there might be a few little guests on there. I'm just so excited about it."

Two years in the making, the album will coincide with the latest Spice Girls reunion. Emma added: "I've always wanted the album to come out early next year and then The Spice Girls thing happened on top of that. It just means it's going to be a very busy year for me, but I can't wait for you to hear it."

Meanwhile, Victoria Beckham admitted she will still be watching the Spice Girls tour, despite declining to partake next summer. "I won't be joining my girls on stage again, but being in The Spice Girls was a hugely important part of my life and I wish them so much love and fun as they go back on tour. I have so much going on with my business and my family, I think the girls are going to do a great job. They have great things planned and I'm looking forward to it."



**NEW!**



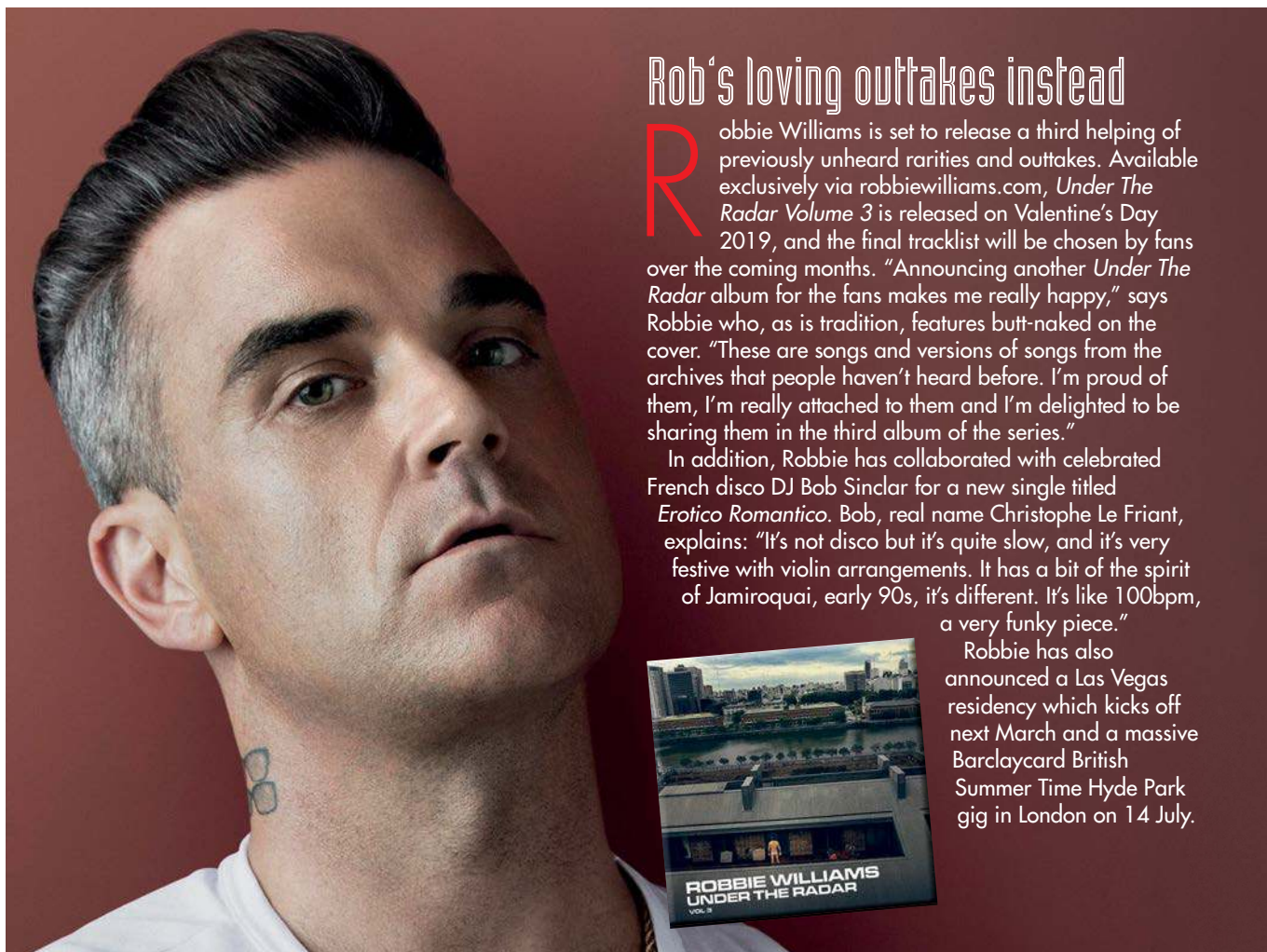
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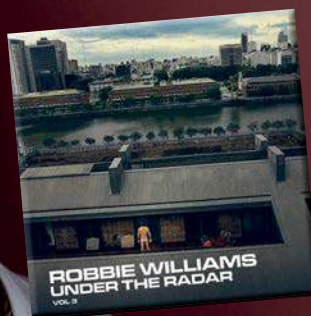


## Rob's loving outtakes instead

**R**obbie Williams is set to release a third helping of previously unheard rarities and outtakes. Available exclusively via [robbiewilliams.com](http://robbiewilliams.com), *Under The Radar Volume 3* is released on Valentine's Day 2019, and the final tracklist will be chosen by fans over the coming months. "Announcing another *Under The Radar* album for the fans makes me really happy," says Robbie who, as is tradition, features butt-naked on the cover. "These are songs and versions of songs from the archives that people haven't heard before. I'm proud of them, I'm really attached to them and I'm delighted to be sharing them in the third album of the series."

In addition, Robbie has collaborated with celebrated French disco DJ Bob Sinclar for a new single titled *Erotico Romantico*. Bob, real name Christophe Le Friant, explains: "It's not disco but it's quite slow, and it's very festive with violin arrangements. It has a bit of the spirit of Jamiroquai, early 90s, it's different. It's like 100bpm, a very funky piece."

Robbie has also announced a Las Vegas residency which kicks off next March and a massive Barclaycard British Summer Time Hyde Park gig in London on 14 July.



## GO WEST KEEP ON GROWING

The last 12 months for Go West have seen them enjoy one of the best years of their career thanks to the increasing demand for live music. The duo have just completed another major UK tour. "This is our biggest-ever year live, busier than 1985 when our first album came out," reveals Peter Cox. "We're trying to freshen up our set and play songs that we haven't performed for a while."

The band played the Rialto Reborn in Coventry in November and returned to the city for a massive Stepback 80s Christmas Concert at the Ricoh Arena on 22 December.

For Peter it was also a return to his roots. "I was working for an organisation in Sheffield and they had a nightclub in Coventry so they transferred me there," he explained.

"I was in the early stages of my first so-called 'professional' gig, working three nights a week in the club. I can't recall the name, but it had a revolving stage and the DJ would be on the other side. It wasn't a particularly glamorous gig, but it was the first I actually got paid for."



## The look of more

Martin Fry is cracking out his gold lamé suit again.

ABC will perform their celebrated debut, *The Lexicon Of Love*, at eight shows around the country in 2019 backed by the Southbank Sinfonia, along with the album's orchestrator Anne Dudley as conductor. The tour kicks off at Southend Cliffs Pavilion on 7 April and calls at Bournemouth, Birmingham, Gateshead, Manchester, Sheffield, Brighton and London's Royal Albert Hall. "For me, the excitement is building," says Fry, who recently teased the possibility of new ABC music. "This truly is my favourite show to perform. There's a magical combination at play in the spark between the band, the orchestra and Anne Dudley conducting. It all adds up to a very special evening!"





# GODFATHERS of POP

— STEVE BRONSKI —

**S**ynth-pop outfit Bronski Beat – Steve Bronski, Jimmy Somerville and Larry Steinbachek – became a mouthpiece for gay issues with their 1984 debut album, *The Age of Consent* and the hit singles, *Smalltown Boy*, *Why?* and *It Ain't Necessarily So*.

Somerville quit the group the following year to become frontman of The Communards and was replaced by a number of different vocalists until Bronski Beat's demise in 1996. Bronski is now the only remaining original member, alongside Ian Donaldson and Stephen Granville. A new and expanded version of *The Age of Consent* was released by London Records earlier this year.

## How important was *The Age of Consent* to gay rights?

It was quite important, as very few pop acts were speaking out about the struggles of the gay community in their day-to-day lives.

## How difficult was it was to be gay in Britain at that time?

For us, it was a lot easier living in London, since there was a thriving gay scene compared to other parts of the country. The press didn't help in their approach to AIDS.

## Did you explicitly set out to be the advocates for the gay lobby?

Not at all, we were just three openly gay men writing songs about our lives. A lot of people in our community just happened to relate to our songs, which was amazing.

## Were you ever aggrieved by the representation of gay men within the entertainment industry?

Not at all, as we were an openly gay band from the start. I think it was a lot harder for those who were afraid to come out of the closet, for fear of persecution from the press and possibly record companies telling them



it could affect sales for fear of losing some of their fanbase.

## You shared a flat with Jimmy and Larry before Bronski Beat – is that how the band came about?

Larry and myself were making music and heard Jimmy singing a song called *Screaming*. We decided to do the music for the track for fun and it just took off.

## Why did you decide to break Bronski Beat up in 1996?

We never actually split up, we just had an extremely long break! I lived in Thailand for many years, then Amsterdam, and Ian was DJing in London, as well as gigs in Russia, Brazil and Europe as Sordid Soundz.

## What was the thinking behind *The Age of Reason*, essentially a reworking of *The Age of Consent*?

Originally, the thought was to make backing tracks for the old songs with the idea of using them for live shows. Then,

when we got Stephen Granville in, we decided to record his vocals. Barney from Cherry Red Records heard the demos and decided we should put it out as an album to reintroduce the band with our new vocalist.

## Are we living in an age of reason when it comes to LGBT rights? A *Flower For Dandara*, the tribute to Brazilian transsexual Dandara dos Santos, would suggest we don't...

We should be living in an age of reason, although in certain parts of the world the discrimination has got worse. People are regularly being tortured and murdered.

## Are you sad that *Smalltown Boy* and *Why?* are as relevant today as when they were first released?

I believe certain music and songs are timeless, and the fact that *Smalltown Boy* and *Why?* are seen as relevant today would say that they meant something to somebody and maybe helped them.

## What, in your opinion, are some of the most significant issues facing the gay community in Britain now?

I guess it's still scary for the younger generation today to come out, but it's definitely a lot easier nowadays, with so many out celebrities and role models on our TVs. We are now allowed to marry and adopt, so we're getting there.

## Are there any plans to release new material? If so, when – and what can we expect?

When we decided to start working together again, Ian suggested I listen to Stephen as they had worked together before. When I heard his voice, I thought he would be perfect for the band and we all got on so well, we just clicked. We are actually in the process of writing new material, which will be released next year. Expect the unexpected! **David Burke**

● Bronski Beat's *The Age of Consent* remastered and expanded edition is available now.



## Down but not under

It's taken over three decades, but Men At Work are finally heading back to the UK. The *Down Under* hitmakers play their first European shows since 1983 next summer. Frontman Colin Hay, who has recently been touring with Ringo Starr, explained: "It was during the Ringo tour of Europe, when confronted with the insatiable appetite for those old songs, that I got excited about the possibility of coming back and touring with my band."

Men At Work play Manchester Academy 2 on 20 June followed by London Shepherd's Bush the day after.

## Supersized Sugarhill

Hip-hop legends The Sugarhill Gang are marking four decades in the business by creating an almighty supergroup. 2019 marks 40 years of the iconic hit *Rapper's Delight* and to toast the occasion they will join former rivals Grandmaster Melle Mel and Scorpio, along with group members The Kidd Creole and Rahiem for new music and combined tour dates. "This is history in the making. We've seen the evolution of hip-hop and rap go from a place where there was a lot of naysayers to it being a full-blown respected genre taking over," states Scorpio of The Furious Five.

## Solo Steps

Steps star Claire Richards admits she feared that she'd missed the boat going solo. The singer releases debut LP *My Wildest Dreams* in February and it's been a labour of love. "Who starts a solo career at the age of 40?" she says. "But the songs clicked and I'm happy." Claire teamed with songwriting greats including Biff 'Spice Girls' Stannard and Diane Warren for the music. But Steps fans needn't worry, the cheerful five-piece will be back: "I'm doing this but I'm committed to the next Steps album. We have already begun looking for songs and start recording next summer for it to come out in spring 2020, then to tour at the end of that year."



### MADNESS GET GRIMEY

Madness are hoping to release new material with grime star Skepta next year. Suggs revealed he recorded "brutally honest songs" with the Mercury Prize winner for what is planned to be a 40th anniversary LP in 2019. "We are starting to think, 'Shit, if we want an album for next year, the big one, we better get on with it,' so we got in the rehearsal room and wrote four songs in a week," revealed Suggs. "I did a two tunes with Skepta actually, I love him."

The singer hosted another of his *An Evening With Suggs And Friends* in November, which this year raised £230,000 for Pancreatic Cancer UK.

At the event he explained how much he loved the grime scene. "I like that kind of music as they're talking about real life but with a sense of humour," he told the *Daily Star*.



## Squeezing out the classics

Glenn Tilbrook and Chris Difford's fine songwriting legacy will be celebrated during Squeeze's next run of shows. The 25-date Difford And Tilbrook Songbook tour kicks off on 17 October at Scunthorpe Baths Hall featuring a mix of hits, plus lesser-known gems from the duo's back catalogue. Glenn Tilbrook says: "We've had something of a renaissance in the last few years, and look forward to this continuing, as we will play a set of songs that are both new, contemporary and as innovative as people have come to expect from us, along with the old beauties."

Sparring partner Difford adds: "I feel excited about the tour. It's a great band full of dedicated, hard-working, passionate people and we have a fabulous catalogue of songs to dip in and out of, so I feel completely blessed. I can't wait to strap on the electric guitar again and sing the songs that got me where I am today."

Squeeze will be supported by Heaven 17 on the tour.



# GODMOTHERS of POP

— T H E R E Z A B A Z A R —

**T**hereza Bazar first hit the charts in the vocal group Guys 'n' Dolls, who reached the Top 5 with *You Don't Have To Say You Love Me*, in 1976. The following year, Thereza and David Van Day left the group to form Dollar. The duo made their bow with the 1978 single *Shooting Star* and stormed the Top 5 with the self-penned *Love's Gotta Hold On Me*. Subsequent hits included *Hand Held In Black And White*, *Mirror Mirror*, *Give Me Back My Heart* and *Give Me Some Kinda Magic*. In 1985, Bazar released a solo single and album, both called *The Big Kiss*, before reforming Dollar for a final Top 10 hit, a cover of Erasure's *Oh L'amour*.

## Are you from a musical family?

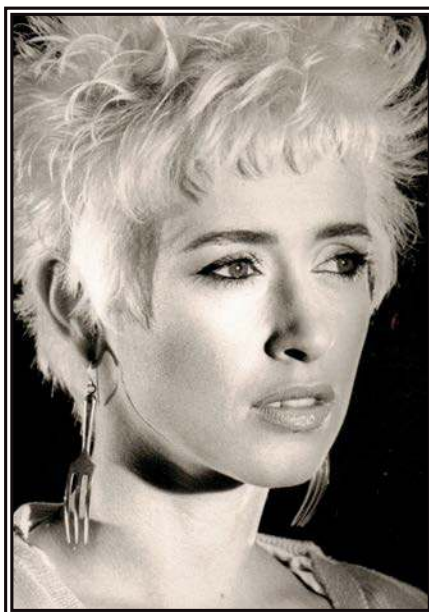
My dad was a semi-professional jazz guitarist and I was brought up listening to trad jazz. Lots of Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra and Dave Brubeck. But I was really into classical, so spent most of my time listening to Chopin and Tchaikovsky. Plus, The Carpenters, just to stay sane!

## Did you want to follow in your father's footsteps as a musician?

I wanted to be a ballet dancer but I wasn't the right body shape. So I thought, 'I'll sing and dance'. I did a musical theatre course and was in a couple of pantomimes and a touring show that did musical theatre numbers. Then I saw an advert in *The Stage* for girls and boys who could sing and dance. That turned out to be Guys 'n' Dolls.

## What's your best memory of that?

I loved being in the studio – seeing the way sounds are created and recorded. Some of the others just wanted to do their vocals and get out, whereas I was happy to stay for ages, to sit and listen and understand what was going on.



## Why did you leave?

David hadn't been happy for some time. He wasn't getting enough of the limelight. We were a couple, so we decided that I'd stay in the group and support him while he looked for a solo deal. But the manager called us into a meeting and said, 'Things aren't going the way we want, there's been a decision and we want you to leave.' I was upset, but it turned out to be the best favour they could have done for us.

## How did you form Dollar?

David couldn't get a solo deal but one of the people he'd been talking to was a radio plugger we'd known through Guys 'n' Dolls. He was forming a management company and said there was a label he thought would sign us as a duo, because there was no Donny and Marie or Olivia Newton-John and John Travolta in England – no girl-boy duos. So we got signed to Acrobat and Chris Neil was our producer on a song called *Shooting Star*.

## Later on, Trevor Horn produced songs such as *Mirror Mirror*. Was Dollar his first production work outside of The Buggles?

I heard *Video Killed The Radio Star* and was captivated. I managed to get his number and asked him to work with us. He said, 'I'm not a producer.' I said, 'Well, at least come and say hello.' We had dinner and the next day he said, 'I met (Buggles songwriter) Bruce Woolley and we came up with this track, would you come to the studio and lay down some vocals?' That was *Hand Held In Black and White*. He's a musical genius. Whatever he did worked.

## What were your aims for your first solo album, *The Big Kiss*?

As a songwriter, you have to bare your soul much more than you do as a performer, so I wanted to see if I could be brave enough to write an album of work that I could be proud of. The publishing company put me with the best writers in the UK and I was so disappointed when it didn't do well. For 10 years, I couldn't bear to listen to it because it brought back such miserable memories.

## Do you still perform the Dollar hits?

No. I thought *O L'amour*, which I produced, was the closest I'd get to getting it right. When it did so well, I didn't want to slip down to being a hack travelling around the country just to make a crust. I wanted to preserve the image of the music. So I emigrated to Australia to learn how to bake cakes, have a family and do other things.

## Is there a chance that you and David might reform to celebrate Dollar's 40th anniversary?

If people want to see us, I would be very happy to do that. It's been such a long time since we've done anything together that it would be very meaningful. I think it would be fantastic. **Douglas McPherson**

● An expanded two-disc edition of *The Big Kiss*, featuring 19 bonus tracks, is released on 19 January by Cherry Pop.





DEVOTED FANS SHOW US  
THEIR COLLECTIONS AND  
POP MEMORABILIA

## No.14

**THE CURE**  
AARON LAW,  
COVENTRY, UK

**Q When did you first become a Superfan of your favourite artist and why?**

**A** I heard a 2006 bootleg of the Royal Albert Hall show of theirs and was hooked. The band's songs can take you through highs and lows in equal measure – a song for every moment and feeling of my life.

**Q What items from The Cure do you have in your collection?**

**A** I mainly focus on posters and T-shirts/memorabilia. I deem things older than myself as worth having! I have many poster tubes full and 30-odd T-shirts of various eras.

**Q How much have you spent on your collection?**

**A** I couldn't dare put an estimate on it over the last decade, but I'm always after bargains. I have been lucky with generous fans and places like eBay, that's for sure!

**Q Do you have a favourite item in your collection?**

**A** The Prayer Tour crew and band jacket that I bought from a sound engineer is fantastic. Some things also have special memories attached.

**Q Have you ever met your favourite band?**

**A** I have been very lucky to meet some members of The Cure including Robert Smith, Lol Tolhurst, Simon Gallup, Roger O'Donnell and Reeves Gabrels. Meeting fans from across the world has been a highlight, though.




**AND FINALLY...**

**Q If you could ask The Cure one question, what would it be?**

**A** Most fans would back me up in asking for a new album and for it to include *It Can Never Be The Same!* Or at least *Reflections* on Blu-ray...





# IAN PEEL'S A TO Z of POP

## — R IS FOR... THE REMIX ALBUM —

THE REMIX ALBUM, NEIL TENNANT ONCE TOLD ME, "IS ABOUT SITTING IN THE STUDIO, BECAUSE IT'S A STUDIO, PLAYING WITH A TRACK BECAUSE YOU CAN PLAY WITH IT". AND IT'S SOMETHING THAT'S SAVED POP THREE TIMES OVER.

**T**o my mind, the first time the remix album saved pop – or at least paved the way for an alternative future – was when producer-led, 3D art-pop and synth-pop came to the fore. What better way to take a hit album into another dimension than to remix the entire thing – not just the singles, the entire album – then repackage and re-release it?

So the first and still the textbook example arrived in 1984, when Soft Cell rethought *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret* and released *Non Stop Ecstatic Dancing*. Within a year, the remix album genre was in full flight, with the release of Martin Rushent's collection of dubs and instrumentals from The Human League's *Dare, Love And Dancing*, and the Fairlight workout that was what I still think is the definitive Imagination album (and perhaps the definitive Fairlight album?), *Nightdubbing*.

By the mid-80s, the remix album was not just an arty experiment, it was a cash cow for record labels delighting in the art of the 'cross sell'. Some massive artists dived in, although with mixed results. In 1987, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis (with added mixes from stalwart 80s innovator Shep Pettibone) took Janet Jackson's *Control* and made an epic mini-masterpiece with *Control: The Remixes* (or *More Control*, as it was known in Japan). This release always made me wonder whether the remix album was more of a UK phenomenon than a US one. Those first three classics of the genre were all from UK artists and *Control: The Remixes* was never actually released in the US (and has yet to appear on Spotify all these years later).



"The release of Janet Jackson's *Control: The Remixes* always made me wonder whether the remix album was more of a UK phenomenon than a US one"

1987 also saw the release of a million-selling remix album in the form of Madonna's *You Can Dance*. I must say when writing this I was fully prepared to chalk this one up as a bit of a misfire, musically speaking, or at least, like its cover, to be very 'of its time'. But it still has its merits. The opening 25-minute mix of *Spotlight, Holiday* and *Everybody* is as captivating as it is relentless.

When *You Can Dance* was released, Pet Shop Boys' *Disco* was still in the charts. This remix album also tapped into the talents of Shep Pettibone as well as other big producers such as Arthur Baker, Julian Mendelssohn and the Latin Rascals. *You Can Dance* kickstarted a series and a dedication to the remix album genre for the duo.

And what about the third time the remix album saved pop? Well, that was the 90s, in that strange crossover period when we all believed that anything was still possible and that the charts could remain as diverse and varied as they had been the previous decade. Looking back, the great remix albums of the 90s maintained a spirit of adventure that's not really been seen since.

Mad Professor's outstanding dub rewiring of Massive Attack's second album, *No Protection* was a must-purchase LP of 1995 and spearheaded a dub/dance revival.

And the decade had started with 1991's comprehensive, 16-track remix album opus by The Beloved, *Blissed Out*.

In between the two is a lesser-known example of the genre, but a personal favourite. The Sugarcubes' *It's-It* was the group's last release before Björk set off for world domination. It's a ragbag assortment and a lesson in putting your best tracks at the start of an LP as, bizarrely, I've gone back and listened to the first four remixes many times over the last 25 years. That's Justin Robertson's takes on *Birthday* and *Motorcrash*, Tony Humphries' housey *Leash Called Love* and S1000's minimal-techno take on *Blue Eyed Pop*. One listen to the rest of the album, on the other hand, was easily enough! ■



THIS MONTH IN...

# POP

## JANUARY 1985

IN OUR ROUND-UP OF JANUARY 1985's HISTORY, MACCA REJECTS DALLAS, PRINCE SNUBS USA FOR AFRICA AND SHEENA EASTON COLLECTS HUSBAND NUMBER TWO...

JOHNNY BLACK



© Blank Archives/Getty Images



*Last Christmas* by Wham! is awarded a platinum single by the BPI.

Paul McCartney turns down a \$1 million offer to appear as a wealthy British landowner on eight episodes of American TV soap *Dallas*.

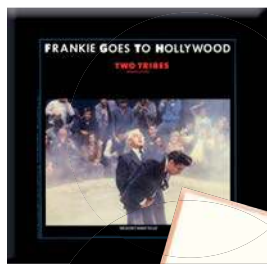
Recording of *The USA For Africa* single *We Are The World*, co-written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, begins at A&M Studios, Los Angeles. The superstar list of guest vocalists includes Jackson, Richie, Bob Dylan, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, Bruce

Springsteen and Ray Charles. Despite having been invited, Prince does not show up.

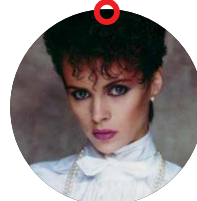
It was the massive success of Bob Geldof's earlier project that prompted some of America's biggest stars to create the USA For Africa single. "I'd been inspired by Band Aid's *Do They*

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • 10 • 11 • 12 • 13 • 14 • 15 • 16 • 17 • 18 • 19 • 20

The *NME's* annual chart points survey shows that Frankie Goes To Hollywood dominated the 1984 singles charts with *Relax* and *Two Tribes*.



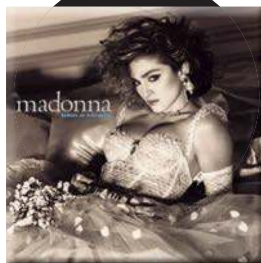
Prince's album *Purple Rain* is confirmed as America's biggest seller since *Thriller* by Michael Jackson.  
© Ed Thrasher



Sheena Easton marries her American agent, Rob Light, in an interfaith ceremony at The Biltmore Hotel, Santa Barbara, California.



King begin their *Love And Pride Tour* at The Johnson, Dunfermline, Scotland.



*Like A Virgin* by Madonna is certified as a gold single in the United States. Two days later, it will peak at No.3 on the UK Singles chart.

Aztec Camera, Orange Juice, Everything But The Girl and The Woodentops play a fund-raising concert for striking miners at the Brixton Academy in London. The event raises £18,000.





Know It's Christmas?," recalled Lionel Richie some years later. "Harry Belafonte called and said: 'It's time for us to do something'. Next thing I knew, I was at Michael Jackson's house chasing his pet chimp Bubbles around and trying to write the song. We wanted an anthem

and listened to *The Star Spangled Banner* and *Rule Britannia* to get the beat. As for the lyric... it just kind of flowed. I'd throw out a line, Michael would come back with a greater line – the same one, with the words changed around – and I'd change his line. Finally, we got this wonderful line. It only took us about two-and-a-half hours to nail it, after three days of preparation."

With a clutch of the world's biggest stars in the studio, producer Quincy Jones takes steps in advance to make the session go smoothly. "I put a line – 'Check your egos at the door' – in a letter I sent to all the artists before they got there. Oh, there were little murmurs beforehand that the song 'is not rock'n'roll', but once we got to the session,

I was sure that everything would even itself out and bring everyone into a euphoric state, and that's what happened."

Having just won four awards at the American Music Awards in Los Angeles, Prince deliberately ignores the invitation, going out on the town instead. But when one of his bodyguards gets involved in a scuffle, the media has a field day, contrasting Prince's wild night out with the charitable activities of every other megastar in town. "It's better that I did it that way – than coming down and participating there," he later claimed. "I would probably have clammed up with so many great people in the room."

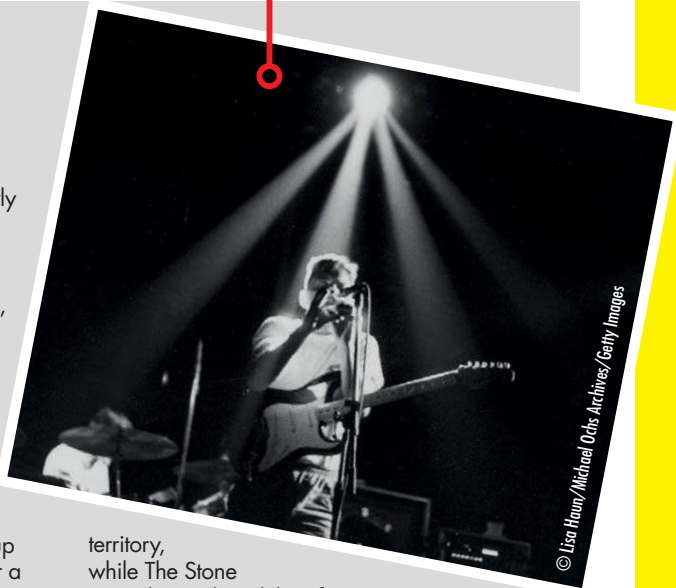


• 21 • 22 • 23 • 24 • 25 • 26 • 27 • 28 • 29 • 30 • 31

New Order play at Tiffany's, Leeds, supported by Happy Mondays, who have yet to release any music. Nobody knew it at the time, but this gig represents an early collision between two generations of Manchester bands. The clubland elite at Manchester's Hacienda are well aware of both bands but further afield, Happy Mondays are still an unknown quantity. Although forming five years earlier, the ticket for this show at a much-loved local venue in Leeds' massive Merrion Shopping Centre still lists the Mondays as 'support'.

In 1985, Tiff's boasts a particularly large dancefloor and a revolving stage, so a band can set up on one side and a DJ on the other. For a crowd more used to throwing carefully choreographed shapes to disco-pop tracks like Y.M.C.A., a double-header of Manchester's finest presents something of a challenge to their twinkly toes, especially when one band represents an already successful post-punk collision with synth-pop and the other's a virtually unknown quantity specialising in a euphoric blend of indie rock with dance music.

It would be 1989 before the term 'Madchester' took root but by 1985, the Mondays have already mapped out the



territory, while The Stone Roses have played their first headlining gig at the Fulham Greyhound in London.

It's hard to deny Peter Hook of New Order's assertion that: "The whole indie music merging with dance music, the fashion, everything, it all came from the Hacienda," but the sold-out 1,000-strong crowd at Tiffany's on this night probably don't care. From the moment New Order open with *The Perfect Kiss* until the encore with *Blue Monday*, everyone knows they are part of wherever it's heading.

## TOP FIVE UK ALBUMS

COMPILED  
BY NME  
26 JANUARY

1 ALF  
ALISON MOYET



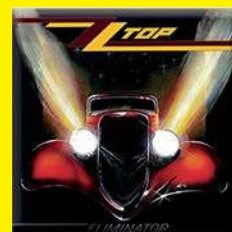
2 AGENT PROVOCATEUR  
FOREIGNER



3 MAKE IT BIG  
WHAM!



4 ELIMINATOR  
ZZ TOP



5 THE HITS ALBUM  
VARIOUS ARTISTS



All data supplied by  
[www.musicdayz.com](http://www.musicdayz.com)





# MADONNA

**A** full 35 years on from the release of her debut single, Madonna has now reached the point in her career where she is expected to churn out uninspired albums of covers, duets, orchestral reworkings or any other gimmick designed to conceal a lack of creativity. Or maybe remaster her past glories before hitting the road to trot out the hits on a seemingly endless 'farewell tour' (hello, Elton). That she rejects this 'heritage

act' route to challenge herself by making fresh, current-sounding music is admirable, but not at all surprising.

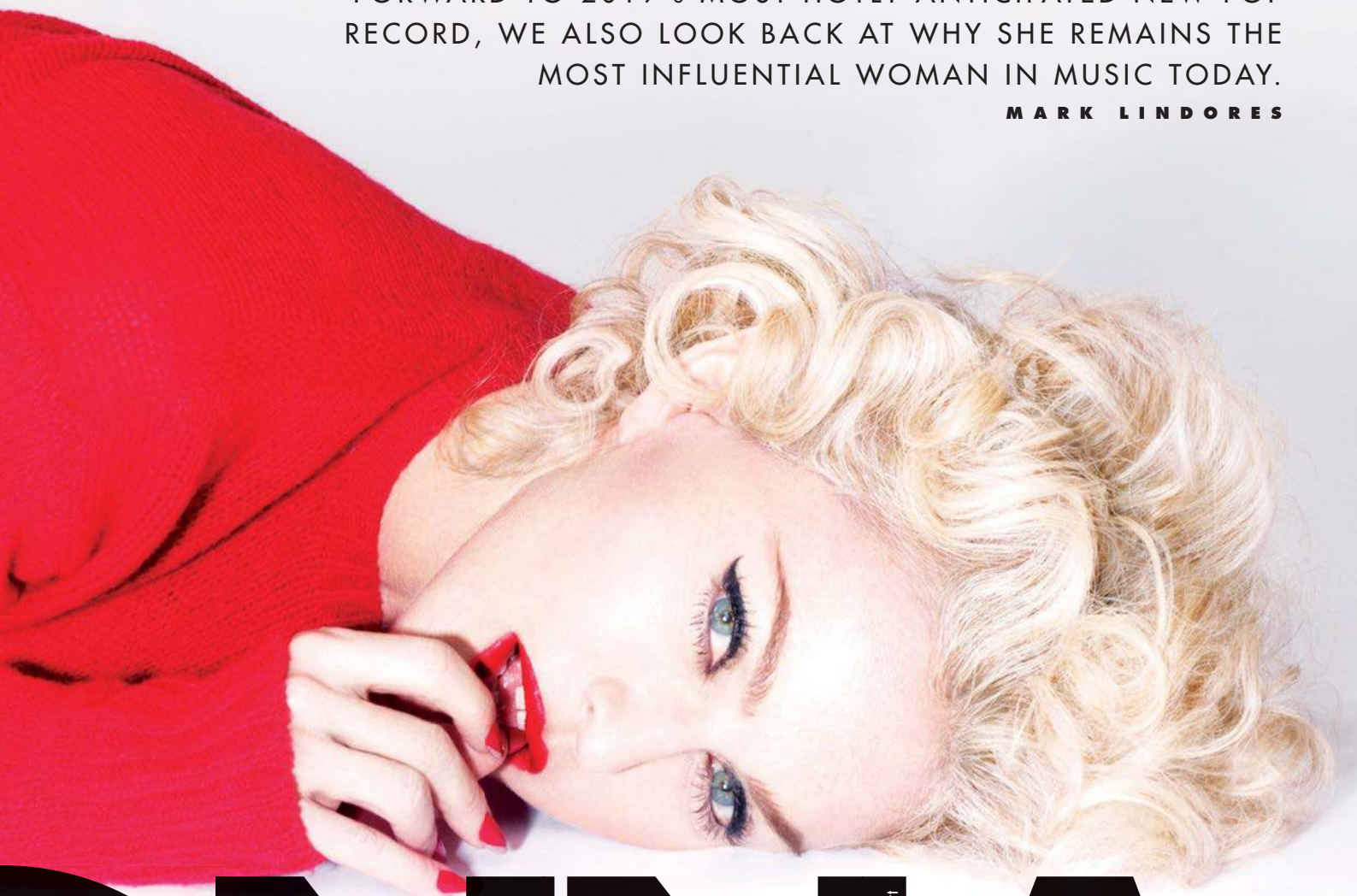
"I've never lived my life in a conventional way and I'm not going to start now," Madonna told *Billboard*. "I like to compare myself to other kinds of artists like Picasso. He kept painting and painting until the day he died. Why? Because I guess he felt inspired to do so. Life inspired him, so he had to keep expressing himself, and that's how I feel. I don't think there's a time, a

date, an expiration date for being creative – I think you go on until you don't have any more to say."

Having taken a year off from music to spend time with her family and concentrate on her Raising Malawi foundation, 2017 saw Madonna settling into her adopted homeland of Portugal and welcoming her new twin daughters, Stella and Esther. As one of the few celebrities to honour their promise of leaving the US should Donald Trump become President, Madonna sought

AFTER MOVING HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD TO BE A 'SOCCER MOM', MADONNA HAS SPENT THE PAST YEAR WORKING ON HER NEW ALBUM. AS WE CAST OUR EYES FORWARD TO 2019'S MOST HOTLY-ANTICIPATED NEW POP RECORD, WE ALSO LOOK BACK AT WHY SHE REMAINS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMAN IN MUSIC TODAY.

MARK LINDORES



# MADONNA

© Matt Als & Marcus Piggott

## INSIDE THE MOST HOTLY-ANTICIPATED ALBUM OF 2019

out the best football academies in the world to help her son David achieve his dream of becoming a professional.

After visiting Turin and Barcelona, she settled on Lisbon and became a self-confessed "full-time soccer mom".

As well as the football academy, Lisbon's thriving music and arts scene was a major factor in Madonna's choice, and it was the city's celebrated Fado music which lit a creative spark within her. "I don't see how I could have gone through the year without

being informed by this input of culture from Lisbon," she told *Italian Vogue*. "I just met lots of

really amazing musicians and I've ended up working with a lot of them on my new record."

### OPEN YOUR HEART

With a direction established, Madonna then compiled a wishlist of who she

wanted to collaborate with. Having worked with a host of different writers and producers on 2015's *Rebel Heart*, including Diplo and Kanye West, she wanted to take a more back-to-basics approach to the creative process.



# Her Six personas that changed pop

WHEN IT COMES TO HER VISUAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY, MADONNA HAS REMAINED ONE STEP AHEAD OF THE ZEITGEIST THROUGHOUT HER CAREER, TAKING LOOKS FROM THE UNDERGROUND TO THE MAINSTREAM, CAUSING CONTROVERSY WITH TABOO IMAGERY, AND SETTING TRENDS IN HIGH FASHION, ON STAGE, ON SCREEN AND ON THE HIGH STREET. HERE, CLASSIC POP GAZES AT THE MANY PIONEERING MADONNAS WE'VE WITNESSED OVER THE YEARS...

## 1 The ground-breaker

Although *Like A Virgin*'s title track and *Material Girl* were the two songs from Madonna's 1984 album that became most synonymous with her, it is a lesser-known cut from that record which provided the most accurate insight into the workings of pop's brightest hope. On *Over And Over*, Madonna sang: "I'm not afraid to say I hear a different beat/ And I'll go out in the streets/ And I will shout it again from the highest mountain," something she's done time and again as she's

headed down "the road less travelled" for over 35 years.

With a single-minded vision and extraordinary trust in her instincts, Madonna has been happy to be an innovator in her field, unafraid to experiment with different styles and genres and tackle controversial subject matters, blazing a trail for her peers.

Taking cues from Prince and Bowie, she reinvigorated the world of stadium rock by incorporating fashion, dance, theatre and art with the seminal *Blond Ambition* World Tour in 1990. A year later, she took fans behind the scenes of that jaunt with her *In Bed With Madonna/Truth Or Dare* documentary, still one of the most intimate, frank and

bold depictions of the life of a celebrity ever made. In between these career milestones, she turned the ban of her *Justify My Love* promo into a major money-spinner by releasing it as a video single and redefined the stagnant award-show performance with her theatrical interpretation of *Vogue* at the 1990 MTV Video Music Awards.

That track itself is the perfect example of Madonna's knack for taking an underground subculture and repackaging it for the masses – in this case, the flamboyant dance style of Harlem drag clubs. "People seem to forget the good that came from this great, pop, gay icon taking voguing and putting it onto the world stage," says former backup dancer Jose 'Xtravaganza' Gutierrez. "She came to the club and took two of the community's own – myself and Luis [Camacho], and took us with her.

That was her way of honouring it, and giving it credit, and keeping it what voguing traditionally is."





# WHO IS MADONNA'S 'DISCO GOD'?

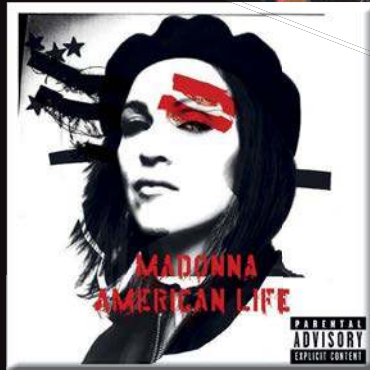


Having grown tired of the soul-searching seriousness of *Ray Of Light*, Madonna had already decided to follow it up with a party record when, during a photoshoot with

photographer Stéphane Sednaoui, she was stopped in her tracks by the music he was playing.

The song was *Disco Science* and the artist was Mirwais – a French technohead whose signature style was clipped beats, hypnotic dance rhythms and chopped-up samples. It was *exactly* the sound she wanted for her next album. With a chequered history as a key figure from France's punk and electro scene, the shapeshifter was the perfect match for her.

Together, they worked on her *Music*, *American Life* and *Confessions On A Dance Floor* albums, before they both moved on. As co-writer and co-producer of some of Madonna's best tracks, including *Don't Tell Me*, *Music* and *Die Another Day*, his return to Madonna has been greeted with elation from long-term fans of the star.



Synchronising schedules with everyone last time round became impossible, with Kanye and Diplo jetting off around the world to fulfil other commitments, so studio time was sporadic and rough cuts of songs were sent back and forth until they were completed. Although the final album included some of Madonna's strongest material in years, she found that creative process "frustrating and chaotic" and insisted on something simpler next time round.

"I'm old-school," Madonna said. "I like to choose a producer to work with – or two – and then I write and produce everything with those people. The whole thing is just done within this little bubble. With something as personal as songwriting, you have to make yourself open to people and vulnerable to people, especially if you're writing about something personal or a sensitive subject, something close to your heart."

When Madonna's manager, Guy Oseary, posted a photo on Instagram celebrating the 20th anniversary of the *Ray Of Light* album and lauded it as a masterpiece, Madonna commented on how she was expected to work now as opposed to then. "Remember when I made records with other artists from beginning to end, and I was able to be visionary and not have to go to songwriting camps where no one can sit still for more than 15 minutes?" she raged.

With that said, the superstar assembled a close-knit group of collaborators who were available to devote time and focus to her album and, more importantly, be in the same room to create with her. Songwriter Starrah (Katy Perry, Nicki Minaj) and producer Billboard, who collaborated on *Ghottown* (one of the highlights of *Rebel Heart*), were the first collaborators confirmed to be working on the album by Madonna on Instagram. The most exciting development however, is the return

## 2 The Influencer

While Madonna has always acknowledged the artists that inspired her while growing up – David Bowie, Debbie Harry, Chrissie Hynde, Aretha Franklin and Patti Smith – it is impossible to imagine a musical, fashion and pop culture landscape which hasn't been shaped by her own influence.

As her (M)DNA pulsates through every aspect of today's scene, everyone from Rihanna to Ariana, Britney to Beyoncé, Kylie to Miley and Gaga has sneaked a peak at Madonna's 'How To' rulebook and adapted it to their own career trajectories, endlessly referencing her in videos, photoshoots and music, not to mention the obligatory 'raunchy' image overhauls.

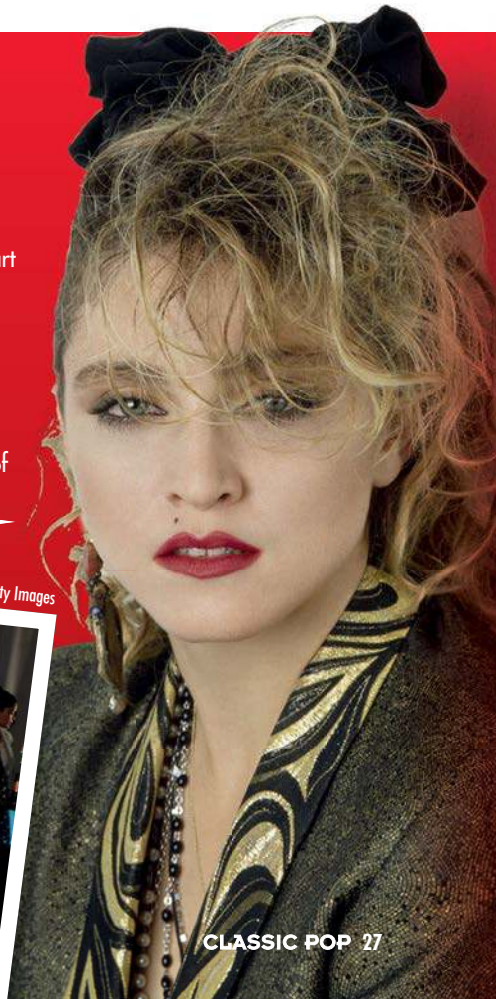
With emulation the sincerest form of flattery, the foolproof solution for those wanting to replicate the Madonna magic is to go direct to the source and work with those who have collaborated with her. Hence the divas that tapped a post-Madonna Jellybean Benitez or Shep Pettibone to remix their tracks in the 80s and 90s, or the artists that queued up to work with William Orbit

or Stuart Price as they basked in the post *Ray Of Light/Confessions...* success. For any producer, remixer or video director, Madonna's seal of approval is the gateway to success.

William Orbit followed *Ray Of Light* with production duties for All Saints and U2, while Stuart Price, aka Les Rythmes Digitales, became one of music's go-to men post-*Confessions On A Dance Floor*, working on albums by Take That, Kylie, Pet Shop Boys and the Scissor Sisters. Visually, Jonas Åkerlund was best known for his controversial *Smack My Bitch Up* video for The Prodigy, until his work with Madonna introduced him to the world of power pop, creating big-budget masterpieces for Beyoncé, Lady Gaga and P!nk, among others.



© Getty Images





**"THE NEW ALBUM  
IS AN ANTIDOTE TO  
WHAT'S GOING ON  
IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS  
RIGHT NOW, WHERE  
EVERY SONG HAS  
20 FEATURED  
ARTISTS ON IT"**

MADONNA



© Joshua Brandao

of her 'disco god' Mirwais, with whom she worked on *Music* and *American Life*, two of her most experimental and interesting albums.

#### LEAK PRACTICE

Madonna has described her new album as "an antidote to what's going on in the music business right now, where every song has 20 featured artists on it and everyone sounds the same." So a fusion of traditional Portuguese and African influences, fused with Mirwais' techno wizardry in the way that he experimented with

folk and Americana on their previous work should certainly fulfil Madonna's promise.

That vague but exciting description is purposely all that Madonna has disclosed about the sound of the music she has worked on, having fallen victim to hackers and leaks on various occasions in the past. After her unfinished *Rebel Heart* album leaked onto the internet in 2014, long before its planned release date (an experience she described as "artistic rape"), Madonna's new ways of working will ensure that nobody hears a second of the album until she says so.

**Would the likes of Beyoncé and Lady Gaga have combined music, art and fashion if Madonna hadn't gone there first?**

## TOP 10 MUST-SEE PERFORMANCES

### 01 VOGUE

1990 MTV VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS

Pulling out all the stops for a *Dangerous Liaisons*-inspired theatrical extravaganza to say goodbye to her *Blond Ambition* touring 'family', this remains the benchmark for TV/award show performances. It was subsequently included on the *Justify My Love* video single.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITaXtWWR16A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITaXtWWR16A)

### 02 EXPRESS YOURSELF

1989 MTV VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS

After recreating the opening of her *Who's That Girl* Tour, this offers a sneak peak at the choreography and remix used on the groundbreaking *Blond Ambition* Tour – plus there's the small matter of Madonna introducing the world to voguing...

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=pehMBaHgpWE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pehMBaHgpWE)

### 03 SOONER OR LATER

1991 ACADEMY AWARDS

Epitomising the golden age of Hollywood for her Oscar-winning song from *Dick Tracy*,

she left the star-packed audience, including her date Michael Jackson, breathless.

[www.dailymotion.com/video/x11vn4](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x11vn4)

### 04 2012 SUPER BOWL MEDLEY

SUPER BOWL XLVI HALF-TIME SHOW

Not even a cameo from LMFAO can spoil the world's greatest entertainer's half-time show at America's biggest sporting event of the year. However, MIA's controversial middle finger salute almost stole some of the attention.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3ik\\_8QjM3U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3ik_8QjM3U)

### 05 HOLLYWOOD

2003 MTV VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS

A celebration of her *Like A Virgin* debut, Madonna plays the groom to two brides – Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera. You may kiss the bride, if you want to make headline news around the world...

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8LzEGHtn-0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8LzEGHtn-0)

### 06 HUNG UP

2005 MTV EUROPE MUSIC AWARDS

After the seriousness of *American Life*, nothing

announces you want to have fun more than emerging from a disco ball in a purple leotard and Farrah Fawcett-flick to a track based on an ABBA staple.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hPlKgCMBE8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hPlKgCMBE8)

### 07 RAY OF LIGHT

1998 MTV VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS

The spiritual girl adopts a sari and henna tattoos and teams up with Lenny Kravitz for a defining performance of her uplifting anthem. The combination of her bindi and visible nipples through her vest causes uproar. Only Madonna...

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3hLz77Ugpg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3hLz77Ugpg)

### 08 LIKE A VIRGIN

1984 MTV VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS

...For the very first time. Beginning her performance perched on a wedding cake and ending it with her wedding dress bunched up around her around her waist, Madonna's naked ambition is there for all to see, even back in 1984.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkSxhG4cbPo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkSxhG4cbPo)



# 3<sup>the</sup> LGBTQI ally

One of the most ardent, militant supporters of the LGBTQI community, Madonna's kinship with gay men began when she was 14 years old and met her dance teacher and mentor Christopher Flynn. "My whole life changed when I met him," she told the BBC's *Omnibus* in 1990. "He took me to my first gay discotheque and I saw a different side of life that I'd never seen before. He told me I was beautiful and special and taught me about appreciating beauty in an unconventional way."

Their relationship had a profound influence on her life and, upon moving to New York in 1979, Madonna's affinity with gay men provided her with some of her most meaningful friendships, including those with artists Martin Burgoyne and Keith Haring, both of whom were among the many friends she lost to AIDS. While the AIDS epidemic made many celebrities turn their backs on the gay community in the late 80s, Madonna emerged as one of its most vocal supporters. She included a safe sex leaflet in her *Like A Prayer* album and has featured all forms of sexuality in her videos.

Advised to distance herself from the gay community to protect her mainstream career, Madonna instead shared her spotlight with her troupe of gay dancers in her tour documentary *In Bed With Madonna*, showing them attending gay-rights marches and including a pivotal scene of two of them French kissing during a game, a powerful message to her gay fans that they weren't alone.

Over three decades, Madonna's support has never wavered. In 2014, she performed with Macklemore and Queen Latifah at the Grammys, where their mash-up of *Same Love* and *Open Your Heart* soundtracked the wedding of 33 couples, gay and straight, to promote acceptance and inclusion.

## 09 BAD GIRL

SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE 1993

Much underrated track from 1992's *Erotica* album, Madonna's appearance on SNL in 1993 is the only time she has performed it live. Luckily, it was accompanied by one of her greatest-ever music videos...

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCnNb41UoE8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCnNb41UoE8)

## 10 BITCH, I'M MADONNA

THE TONIGHT SHOW WITH JIMMY FALLON

Madonna's energetic, fun-filled track from *Rebel Heart* is given the perfect live treatment in 2015 as she takes over the corridors of New York's Rockefeller Center as her performance starts in her dressing room and finishes onstage.

[www.dailymotion.com/video/x2ms1h5](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2ms1h5)



(L to R)  
Debi Mazar,  
Gloria Steinem,  
Madonna and  
(front row) Amy  
Schumer attend the  
Women's March on  
Washington rally  
on 21 January 2017

When Madonna appeared at the 2016 Billboard Awards to collect her Woman Of The Year award, she delivered a captivating speech which detailed her horrific treatment as a woman in the music industry. After recounting tales of being a penniless and struggling artist, being raped at knife-point and losing friends to both AIDS and gun crime in her early days in New York, she told how she came to the realisation that self-belief was the only way she would succeed and how that instilled in her a steely drive for which she has since been belittled and demonised.

Throughout her early career, she was demeaned in the studio for her inexperience and gender, or branded as difficult or bitchy for having the audacity to voice her opinion. Once established, she took full creative control and is credited as co-writer and co-producer on every original song she has released since *True Blue* in 1986, as well as masterminding how she markets herself – a talent which even her fiercest critics grudgingly admire.

After the publication of her controversial *Sex* book in 1992, Madonna said she felt "like the most hated woman on the planet" due to the ferocity of the backlash. She was horrified by the industry's double standards, with artists such as Prince flaunting their sexuality, while she was vilified for doing so. After accusations from feminist author Camille Paglia that she'd set back the women's movement, she created her own branch of feminism.

Embracing a woman's right to express her sexuality, Madonna branded herself "a Bad Feminist".

As an artist who has constantly had to defend the way she expresses herself, she is always at the forefront of discussions about women's rights. In 2017, when she appeared at the Women's March in Washington DC to deliver a speech and perform in protest of Donald Trump, a throwaway comment that she had thought about "blowing up the White House" to vent her frustration made headlines around the world, proof that her voice remains as powerful as ever.



Don't go for second-best, baby... Madonna's career has been driven by a steely determination and a message to believe in yourself

# TOP FIVE MUST-SEE INTERVIEWS

## 01 LATE SHOW WITH DAVID LETTERMAN

1994, CBS

In this infamous appearance on David Letterman's show in 1994, a riled Madonna confronted him for making her the subject of his jokes. Dropping the F-bomb 14 times, the show was a hit in the ratings, but did nothing to alleviate the backlash Madonna was facing at the time after publishing her *Sex* book.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBm5kzTYfNU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBm5kzTYfNU)

## 02 AFTER SHOW

1995 MTV VIDEO MUSIC AWARDS

Madonna's post-show interview at the 1995 MTV Video Music Awards takes a turn for the worst when it is gatecrashed by a worse-for-wear Courtney Love, resulting in TV gold.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Zlijf15YAE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Zlijf15YAE)

## 03 OMNIBUS

1990, BBC1

One of the first in-depth TV profiles came in 1990, when the BBC's flagship arts show *Omnibus* interviewed Madonna to coincide with the release of *The Immaculate Collection*. It's notable for her collagen-injected lips and was filmed, at her request, in black and white.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKm3o16UCFo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKm3o16UCFo)

## 04 PARKINSON

2005, BBC1

The Queen Of Pop met the King Of Chat in 2005, when a *Confessions On A Dance Floor*-era, adopted-Brit Madonna opened up to Parky about her life and career.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=E\\_H1JR5y\\_bY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_H1JR5y_bY)

## 05 MTV RAW

1984, MTV

At a time when the 'M' in MTV could well have stood for 'Madonna', the rise of the music station and the rise of the star collide in two of her earliest interviews. Despite being a new artist at the time, global stardom beckoned and Madonna is frank and forthright during a music seminar to discuss the importance of MTV and music videos.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwT7XOI0HIY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwT7XOI0HIY)



# 5 the controversy Seeker

From her introduction to the world by Bette Midler at Live Aid as "a woman who pulled herself up by her bra straps, and who has been known to let them down occasionally", a reference to pre-fame nude pics of Madonna resurfacing in *Penthouse* and *Playboy*, controversy and Madonna have never been far from each other. Shortly after, *Dress You Up*'s inclusion on Tipper Gore's 'Filthy Fifteen' list of explicit songs leading to Parental Advisory stickers on records, cemented Madonna's reputation as the queen of controversy.

Recognising it was a valuable tool she could utilise to draw attention and amplify her message, Madonna never shied away from tackling issues deemed controversial. *Papa Don't Preach* shone a light on the subject of teen pregnancy and conveyed a pro-choice message in 1986, with Madonna going on to explore issues such as racism (*Like A Prayer*), sexism (*Express Yourself*), homophobia (*In Bed With Madonna*) and politics (*American Life*) in her songs and videos. Her concerts, which show her at her most frank and unfiltered, have incurred the wrath of the Pope, the police and Vladimir Putin.

As it became commonplace for her videos to be banned, Madonna herself pulled the plug on her 2003 *American Life* promo due to the hostile nature of extremists at the time. Though she'd never previously censored herself, concerns for her two young children forced her to pull the video, which contained strong anti-war sentiments around the time of the US invasion of Iraq.

Recently, even Madonna's tamest exploits have caused controversy, simply due to her age. A constant victim of ageism, Madonna wryly noted that the most controversial thing she's ever done was "sticking around". Since she's never succumbed to drugs, alcohol or rehab and has stayed in shape and remained at the top of her game, the things she is now criticised for, which include wearing teeth grills, having veiny hands and generally not behaving in an 'age-appropriate' way, prove how desperate people are to bring her down.



**"WE DON'T PUT THINGS UP ON SERVERS ANYMORE. UNFORTUNATELY, IT SUCKS, BUT THAT'S HOW LEAKS HAPPEN"**

**MADONNA**

"We don't put things up on servers anymore," she says. "If we work on computers, we're not on wi-fi, we're not on the internet, we don't work in a way where anybody can access the information. Hard drives of music are hand-carried to people and we don't leave music laying around. When we have photoshoots or videoshoots, everyone has to leave their phones at the door. Unfortunately, it sucks, but that's the way it is – that's how leaks happen."

Having taken her time and put her heart and soul into the album, Madonna is adamant that it will only be released when she is 100% happy with it. In the meantime, her MET Gala performance of *Beautiful Game* and Quavo collaboration *Champagne Rose* (two tracks that couldn't be more different) will have to suffice. As Madonna says when she answers back to her demanding fans on Instagram: "Good music takes time – be patient." Behold, she is coming soon... ■

## MET GALA 2018



The first Monday in May is always a special day for Madonna watchers, due to her annual show-stopping appearances at the MET Gala – the fashion world's equivalent to the Oscars.

Last year, they had even more reasons than usual to celebrate. Not only did Madonna walk the red carpet on the arm of long-term collaborator Jean-Paul Gaultier, but she also delivered a mesmerising performance on the steps of New York's Metropolitan Museum which included *Like A Prayer*, a cover of Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah* and an excerpt from new track *Beautiful Game* (soccer mom or not, it's got nothing to do with football).

The performance sparked frenzy among Madonna's fans, who expected it to be released immediately. Some even speculated it was part of a surprise album drop, but the only release was a professionally-shot video of her performance uploaded to her YouTube channel on her 60th birthday in August.

## 6 the political activist

Aware of how far-reaching her influence is, Madonna has never been afraid to lend her support to a politician she believes in, or appear at charity gigs such as Live Aid, Live 8, Live Earth and the Sound Of Change concert.

As her work took on a political relevance with her exploration of social themes at the end of the 80s, Madonna encouraged fans to get involved in the 1990 election by taking part in a *Rock The Vote* ad, where she appeared in her underwear draped in a US flag and threatened anyone that didn't vote with "a spanky" if they didn't – a reference to her recent *Hanky Panky* single. She then took a more serious approach to lending support to Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. She has also remained an outspoken advocate of issues such as women's rights and LGBTQI acceptance. When in Russia on her MDNA Tour in 2012, she received death threats and was threatened with jail by Vladimir Putin if she promoted "gay behaviour" during her show. In true Madonna style, she refused to change her concert and criticised Russia after 87 of her fans were arrested for displaying "gay behaviour" during her concert.

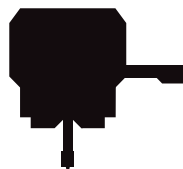


"I've considered myself a freedom fighter since the early 80s when I realised I had a voice and I could sing about more than being a material girl or feeling like a virgin," she said. "I have been punished for speaking my mind and for sticking my neck out for this kind of discrimination. But that's okay."

More recently, the focus of her political interest has been Africa. She has founded her own charity, Raising Malawi, to help regenerate the country.

As well as frequently visiting the country herself (she takes the four children she adopted from there to keep them in touch with their roots), Madonna has raised millions of pounds, which have been ploughed into building homes, schools and hospitals.

**Madonna has adopted four children from Malawi and raised millions of pounds for worthy causes in the country**



CLASSIC

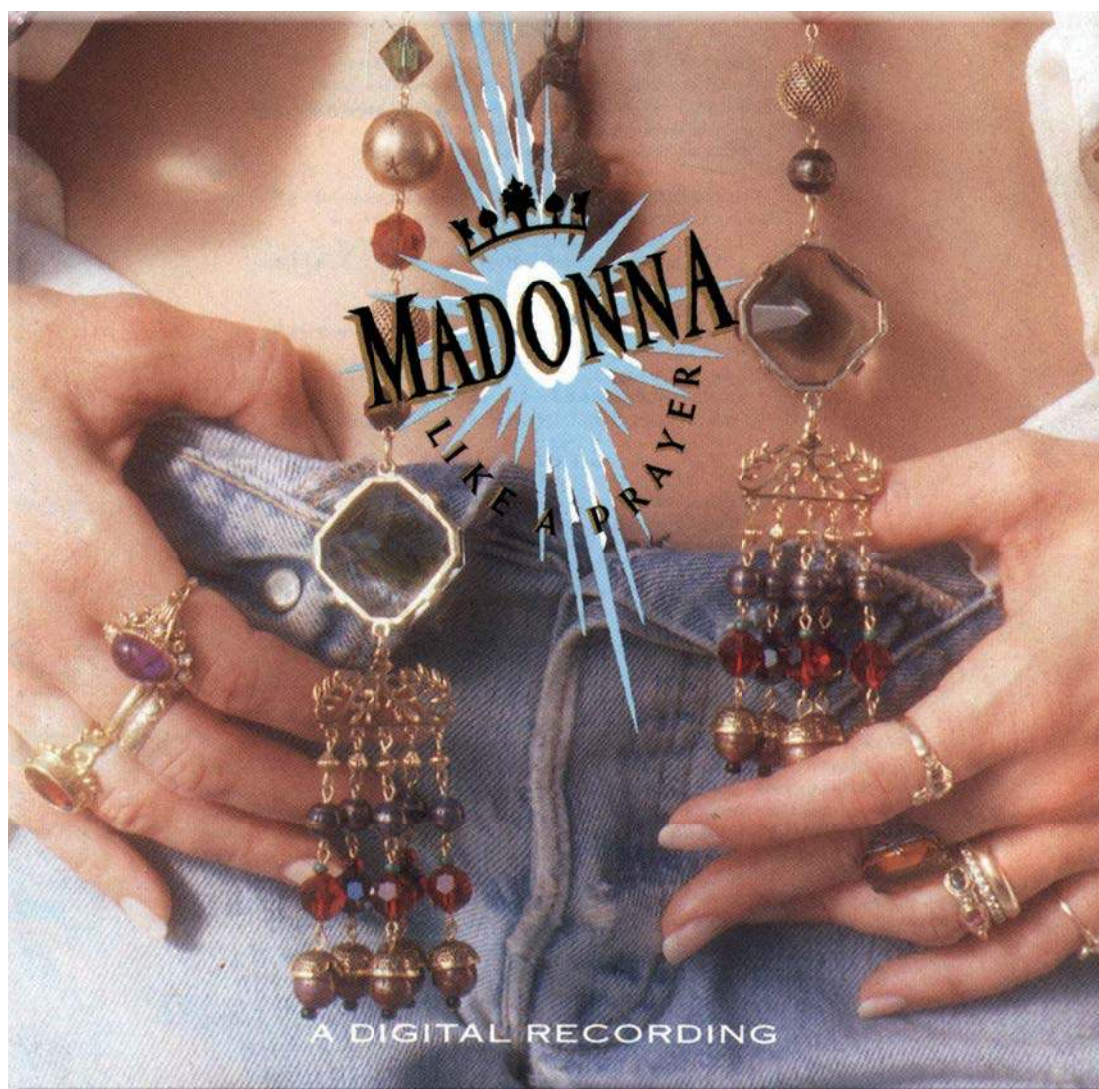
ALBUM

# LIKE A PRAYER

**MADONNA**

MADONNA'S FOURTH STUDIO ALBUM IS AN IMMACULATE COLLECTION OF SONGS WHICH SAW THE SUPERSTAR LOOKING INWARDS FOR DIVINE INSPIRATION – TAKING IN GRIEF, LOSS, REDEMPTION AND EMPOWERMENT. WITH THE CELESTIAL LIKE A PRAYER, SHE CREATED HER OWN NEW TESTAMENT.

**MARK LINDORES**





**T**hough Madonna had already established herself as the definitive female pop artist of the 80s with a catalogue of classic hits under her Boy Toy belt, she had found herself at a crossroads in her public and professional life when she entered the studio in 1988 to work on her fourth album. Devastated by the breakdown of her marriage to actor Sean Penn and having recently turned 30, Madonna was feeling increasingly introspective, compelled to confront her feelings about the life-altering events that she had brushed aside for years.

Two years on from *True Blue*, her most successful album to date, and feeling immense pressure to follow it up, she was desperate to shift focus back to her work from the tabloid caricature that she was becoming thanks to her tumultuous union with Penn.

Sean's propensity to lash out at paparazzi photographers had made him public enemy number one in the tabloids and even landed him in jail. Madonna's willingness to stand by her man made her guilty by association and earned the couple the moniker, 'the Poison Penns'.

Meanwhile, her 'scandalous' antics with openly bisexual comedienne Sandra Bernhard – dressing in matching outfits for an appearance on David Letterman's talk show which implied their relationship was more than platonic, and teaming up with *Dirty Dancing*'s Jennifer Grey and dubbing themselves 'the Snatch Batch' (a take on Sinatra's Rat Pack) to frequent New York's infamous lesbian nightclub, Cubbyhole, only fanned the flames of her tabloid notoriety.

As the press plotted her inevitable downfall and primed the likes of Tiffany, Debbie Gibson and Taylor Dayne for pop supremacy, Madonna began work on her next album. Having spent her hiatus from the spotlight collaborating with playwright David Mamet on her Broadway debut *Speed-The-Plow*, and working with filmmakers Woody Allen and Howard Brookner, she was inspired to make the record



Madonna and Sean Penn were divorced in 1989, the year of *Like A Prayer*

© Jeffrey Asher/Getty Images

much more personal than her previous work, delving deep into her psyche and purging her feelings on subjects such as the breakdown of her marriage, the death of her

mother as well as her strict Catholic upbringing.

"We called it the divorce album," says Pat Leonard, who co-wrote and co-produced the LP with Madonna. "Everything

took four or times longer to do as she kept breaking down in the studio. It was a hard time for her."

While Madonna felt she had proved herself musically by

## THE PLAYERS



### PATRICK LEONARD

One of Madonna's most prolific collaborators, Pat had worked with Madonna since he was hired as the musical director of The Virgin Tour, going on to co-write and co-produce much of the *True Blue* album with her. As well as hooking up with Elton John, Bon Jovi and Leonard Cohen among others, he is currently working on *Bring The Circus Home*, an album of reworkings of songs he created with Madonna.



### STEPHEN BRAY

Friends from Detroit, Madonna and Stephen formed a band in New York called Emmy, which cemented their songwriting partnership. Together, they created hits such as *Into The Groove*, *Causing A Commotion*, *True Blue* and *Angel*. They fell out after Stephen released *Pre-Madonna* in 1997, a compilation of demos from their early days in New York. He has also written Broadway musicals, including *The Color Purple*.



### PAULINHO DA COSTA

One of the greatest percussionists of all time and also one of the most prolific, his exhaustive discography reads like a *Who's Who* of the greats. He has played on albums by Michael Jackson, Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, the Bee Gees, Whitney Houston, Celine Dion and Bob Dylan as

well as more than 150 film soundtracks and has released a number of solo albums.



### JONATHAN MOFFETT

Jonathan 'Sugarfoot' Moffett got his break after moving to Los Angeles from his native New Orleans in 1979.

Within weeks of relocating, he began touring with The Jacksons. It was during 1984's Victory Tour that he was spotted by Madonna. He played on her subsequent three albums and tours, as well as touring with Michael Jackson, George Michael and Diana Ross.



### NIKI HARIS

Niki began working as backing vocalist for Madonna during 1987's *Who's That Girl* World Tour and featured consistently on the star's albums and tours until 2001's *Drowned World* Tour. Aside from her work with Madonna, Niki has been a singer and choreographer in her own right and for other artists for 30 years. Her biggest chart success was with *Exterminate!* and *Do You See The Light (Looking For)* as the vocalist of Snap! in 1992 and 1993.



### DONNA DE LORY

Donna's working relationship with Madonna began after she sang on a demo of her then-boyfriend Gardner Cole's song *Open Your Heart*, which found its way to Madonna. Donna began singing backup for Madonna on the *Who's That Girl* Tour and continued until 2007's *Confessions* Tour. She has also released 11 solo albums and performed with Carly Simon and Belinda Carlisle.

co-writing and co-producing her *True Blue* album, she felt she had to prove it hadn't been a fluke and worked again with Pat, feeling they had developed a genuine rapport. Typically, he worked on musical ideas while Madonna contributed melodies and drew from years of her personal diaries and journals to form the lyrics. The first song they wrote was *Like A Prayer*, followed by *Promise To*

*Try* (which dealt with the death of her mother) and *Oh Father* (Madonna's account of her troubled relationship with her father and authority figures in her life).

Known as the 'Holy Trinity' of the album, they became *Like A Prayer's* emotional core, informing the direction the record would take, with Madonna's vulnerability perfectly encapsulating the

feelings she wanted to convey in the songs. *Till Death Do Us Part*, a chilling account of domestic abuse, made especially uncomfortable listening thanks to the circumstances surrounding the end of her marriage to Sean Penn.

Madonna spoke openly about her lyrical honesty to *SongTalk* magazine: "I didn't try to candycoat anything or

make it more palatable for mass consumption. I wrote what I felt... Because this was what was coming out of me."

As well as the searingly honest lyrics, a huge part of the songs' authenticity came from the conviction in Madonna's vocal delivery. Gone was the much-maligned 'Minnie Mouse on helium' girlish voice of some of her earlier work, replaced by

## THE SONGS

### 1 LIKE A PRAYER

The first song written and recorded for the album, *Like A Prayer* dictated the direction of the entire record. With the verses stripped back to an almost a cappella production, the contrast of the uplifting gospel chorus highlighted the song's dual meaning of religious and sexual ecstasy.

Although Pat Leonard was initially horrified that Madonna wrote the chorus alluding to fellatio and asked her to change it, she refused, and the song's double entendre went unnoticed due to the controversy generated by the video.

### 2 EXPRESS YOURSELF

Written and produced by Madonna with former boyfriend and long-time collaborator Stephen Bray, *Express Yourself* is a tribute to the pair's love of Sly & The Family Stone. Bristling with Stone's trademark soul, funk and horns, *Express Yourself* is a rallying anthem of freedom and empowerment, with Madonna using her platform to urge her fans not to settle for second best and to strive to reach their full potential.

For its release as a single, Madonna called on producer Shep Pettibone to transform the song into a club anthem with a house makeover. It was that version which she performed at the 1989 MTV Awards, her only live performance of the *Like A Prayer* era, during which she debuted a new dance style called voguing...

### 3 LOVE SONG

Longtime friends and mutual admirers of each other's work, Madonna and Prince met up to discuss working on a musical

together in 1988. However, the project failed to come to fruition as Madonna hated Minneapolis and returned to Los Angeles, forcing the pair to finish *Love Song* by sending tapes back and forth between the two cities.

The process and time constraints meant that the track didn't turn out as well as either Madonna or Prince had hoped, though Madonna loved the sonic combination of synthesised drums, sparse instrumentation and sensual vocals so much she'd deploy them to superb effect the following year on 1990's *Justify My Love*. She also later recycled a lyric from *Love Song* for 2005's *Hung Up*.

### 4 TILL DEATH DO US PART

On the surface, *Till Death Do Us Part* is one of *Like A Prayer's* most upbeat moments, but it is in fact one of the album's darkest and most haunting tracks due to its visceral depiction of the breakdown of Madonna's marriage to Sean Penn.

With lyrics such as: "The bruises they will fade away/ You hit so hard with the things you say/ I will not stay to watch your hate as it grows" and "When you laugh it cuts me just like a knife", the song appears to confirm tabloid stories at the time of the turbulent marriage of 'the Poison Penns'.

### 5 PROMISE TO TRY

Stripped back to a simple piano track and emotive vocal teeming with vulnerability, *Promise To Try* is a heartbreaking ballad which finds Madonna attempting to make sense of her mother's death. Having recently turned 30, the age her mother was when she died, the song's emotional outpouring took on particular resonance.

In one of the most poignant scenes of 1991's *In Bed With*

*Madonna/Truth Or Dare* documentary, *Promise To Try* plays while Madonna visits her mother's grave.

### 6 CHERISH

Included on the album as a safety net in case Madonna's audience didn't take to Madonna's arresting new sound, *Cherish* recalled the giddy romanticism of the *True Blue* era. A playful, unabashed love song, it returns to the early days of Madonna and Sean's relationship with its proclamations of undying love, a sentiment which comes across as slightly unsettling after that relationship's eventuality is laid out in such searing honesty on the earlier *Till Death Do Us Part*.

### 7 DEAR JESSIE

Inspired by The Beatles' *Dear Prudence*, Madonna decided to write a song for Pat Leonard's baby daughter Jessie, celebrating childlike innocence, imagination and belief in magic. With lyrics celebrating a land of make-believe with pink elephants, magic lanterns, rainbows and mermaids, the song possesses a lullaby-like quality.

When Pat Leonard posted an instrumental clip of the original demo on Instagram recently, it revealed a song similar in sound to *Papa Don't Preach* with its hard drums and strings. The eventual psychedelic sound of the final version of *Dear Jessie* was achieved by simply removing the drums, which transformed it completely. The song was released as the album's fourth UK single with an animated video in December 1989.

### 8 OH FATHER

Inspired by Simon & Garfunkel, *Oh Father* was described by Madonna as her way of "dealing with the authority figures in my life". Though the song was released as the fourth single

from the album in the US, it wasn't released as a single in the UK until 1996, when it was used to promote Madonna's ballads compilation *Something To Remember*. Pat Leonard recently said that *Oh Father* is the best song he ever worked on with Madonna.

### 9 KEEP IT TOGETHER

A second collaboration with Stephen Bray, *Keep It Together* is about remaining true to your roots and the importance of family. As with *Express Yourself*, *Keep It Together* was influenced by Madonna's love of Sly & The Family Stone.

Drawing on both the funkiness and the sentiment of Stone's *Family Affair*, Madonna fused the two songs together for her show-stopping performance as the encore to the *Blond Ambition* World Tour.

### 10 SPANISH EYES

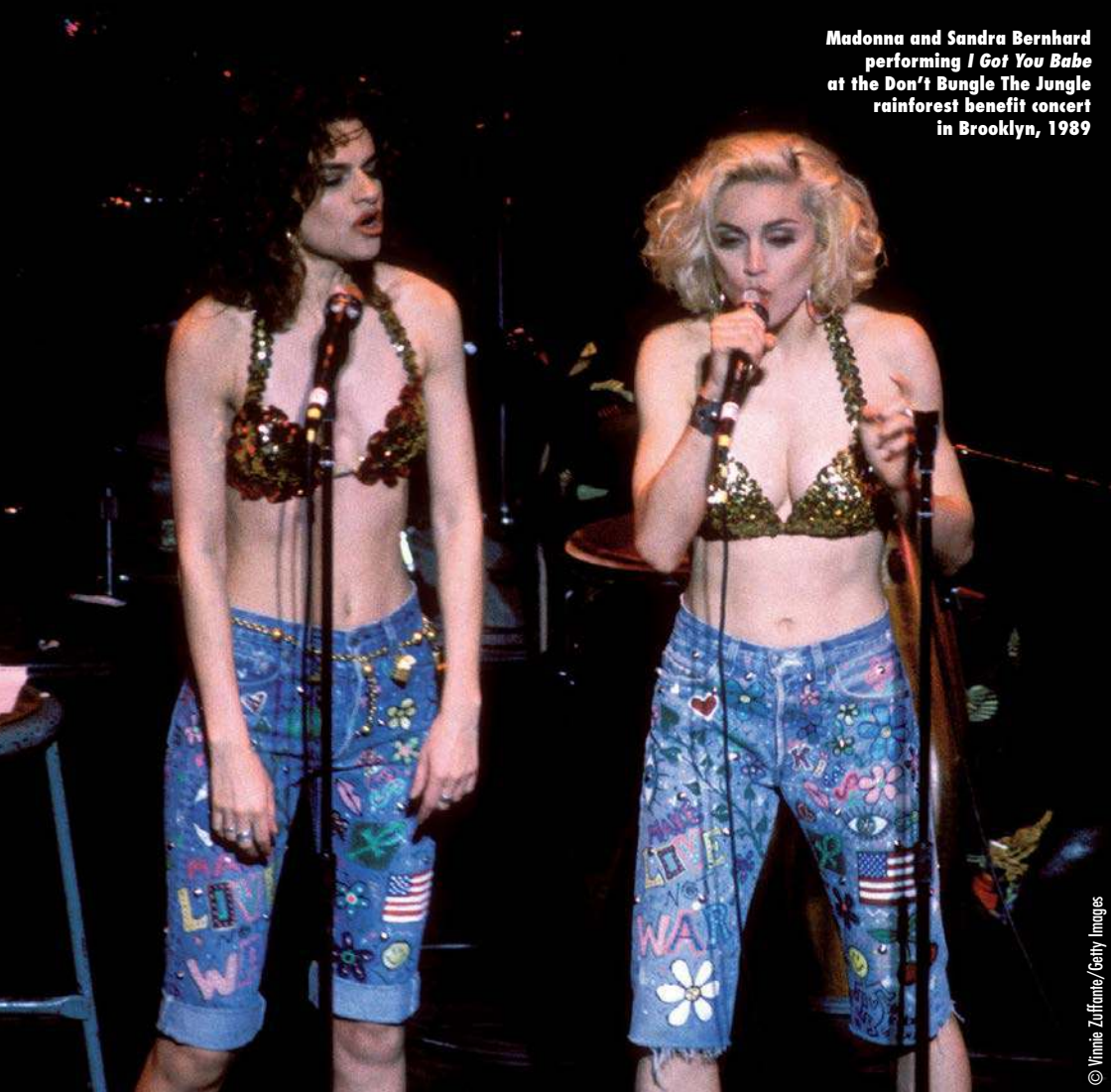
After *La Isla Bonita* and *Who's That Girl*, *Spanish Eyes* took the Latin theme to a darker place. "Like most of *Like A Prayer*, it was written in a day," Pat recalls. "I wrote this at the piano and at the top of the page, it says 'tango'. She [arrived] in the morning, listened to it, wrote the lyric, put a guide vocal down, and went home. What I always believed was good about our collaborations is that the spirit of the composition was always very closely reflected in the sentiment of the lyric, and the spirit of it as well."

### 11 ACT OF CONTRITION

As the *Like A Prayer* instrumental track plays in reverse, Prince plays screaming freestyle guitar licks while Madonna recites a Catholic prayer for the album's bizarre closer. In 2012, Madonna recited the same prayer as the opening of her *MDNA* Tour.



Madonna and Sandra Bernhard performing *I Got You Babe* at the Don't Bungle The Jungle rainforest benefit concert in Brooklyn, 1989



© Vinnie Zuffante/Cathy Images

"A lot of the vocals we kept were the first takes. They were more spontaneous and emotional."

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battle-scarred tones, thick with emotion. "A lot of the vocals we kept were the first takes," Madonna said. "They were a lot more spontaneous and emotional and integral to the music. We had every intention of going back and fixing them, but when we listened to them, we said: 'Why should we? They're fine'.

"I think it's because I didn't have the pressure of knowing it was the final vocal. Strange sounds and imperfections – we kept them all in, because they're emotions, too."

Although it had been cathartic for Madonna to pour her heart into *Like A Prayer*'s darker moments, the album needed some light to ensure it was not too much of a culture shock to Madonna's fanbase. *Cherish* was an unabashed love song which harked back to

the *True Blue* sound and *Dear Jessie* was a psychedelic lullaby which joyously celebrated the childhood innocence Madonna was robbed of following the death of her mother when she was just five years old.

Madonna also collaborated with long-term co-writer Stephen Bray for a pair of funk-driven tracks, influenced by their mutual love of Sly & The Family Stone – *Keep It Together* and *Express Yourself*, with *Love Song*, a hook-up with Prince (a remnant from an aborted musical they'd been working on) completing the LP.

The world first heard about *Like A Prayer* in January 1989 when soft-drinks giant Pepsi announced that they had signed an unprecedented \$5 million deal with Madonna to be their new face and would be debuting her single

in an advert in a simultaneous broadcast around the world, as well as sponsoring her next world tour. The company had recently fulfilled a similar arrangement with Michael Jackson, and with the biggest female superstar on the planet signed to them, Pepsi were confident the deal would see them emerge as the true victors over Coca-Cola in the 'cola wars', which were at their height at the time.

Described by Madonna as the "ultimate meeting of art and commerce", she didn't want to feel used by Pepsi and inked the deal subject to a set of her own stringent ground rules.

She didn't want to dance in the advert (although she relented after meeting choreographer Vincent Paterson) and, as other artists had done, she categorically refused to allow *Like A Prayer* to be amended in any way to incorporate Pepsi into the lyrics, feeling it would cheapen her song.

Entitled *Make A Wish*, the two-minute advert was a sentimental depiction of

Madonna watching home movies of her eighth birthday party, and was screened around the world on 2 March 1989 to an estimated audience of 250 million. Thrilled with the response, Pepsi put an edited ad into heavy rotation across the world, delighted with their new signing.

Although Madonna and Pepsi's venture was commended as perfectly executed by business analysts, the success was to be short-lived. The following day, Madonna released her own video for *Like A Prayer*, with cataclysmic results.

The video, with its scenes of stigmata, Madonna kissing a black Saint (often misconceived as being a 'black Jesus') and dancing in a field of burning crosses provoked a response more extreme than anyone could have had imagined.

Religious groups were up in arms, burning effigies of Madonna and threatening a boycott of her and anyone associated with her. Madonna was typically defiant in her response, claiming the video's positive message had been overlooked. Frustrated that their plight was falling on deaf ears, the protestors turned their attentions to Pepsi, threatening to boycott them and all of their associated companies.

Pepsi buckled under the pressure and ended the deal, allowing Madonna to keep her \$5 million fee.

In what turned out to be an indispensable lesson for Madonna – that of teaching her the value of controversy as currency, both the single and album topped the charts around the world when they were released in March 1989. As well as the album's commercial success (it went on to sell over 15 million copies and produced a further five hit singles), it was subject to unanimous critical acclaim – a first for Madonna. *NME* gave the album 10/10, while *Rolling Stone* described it as being "as close to art as pop music gets".

Nobody was as surprised by the reception as Madonna herself. "People don't realise I was a songwriter as well as a slut?" she joked. "I guess the image gets in the way. What

# THE BIG PICTURE THE VIDEOS

## LIKE A PRAYER

DIRECTOR: MARY LAMBERT

A passion play in which Madonna's character witnesses a black man wrongly accused of stabbing a woman and risking everything by going to the police to incriminate the real perpetrator, *Like A Prayer* stands as one of her most controversial videos due to its religious imagery. The clip was condemned by religious groups and fundamentalists, who put pressure on Pepsi to cancel their ad campaign with her.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=79fzeNUqQbQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79fzeNUqQbQ)



## EXPRESS YOURSELF

DIRECTOR: DAVID FINCHER

Costing a cool \$5 million, *Express Yourself* was the most expensive video ever made at the time. Set in a futuristic industrial landscape inspired by Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, the clip sees Madonna leading a workforce of manual labourers, chained to a bed, and as a Dietrich-inspired androgyne replicating male mannerisms. The clip is packed with symbolic imagery, enforcing the message of empowerment and confident female sexuality.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5VcUzP\\_O\\_8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5VcUzP_O_8)



## CHERISH

DIRECTOR: HERB RITTS

While being photographed for the album cover, Madonna asked longtime collaborator Herb Ritts to direct a video for her. Though exclusively a stills photographer, Madonna persuaded him by letting him choose any song – thus kickstarting his video-directing career. The clip captured Madonna frolicking in the Malibu surf with mermen.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=8q2WS6ahCnY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8q2WS6ahCnY)



## OH FATHER

DIRECTOR: DAVID FINCHER

Madonna's second Fincher collaboration was an epic depicting a young girl suffering the death of her mother, her troubled relationship with her father and how that impacts her into womanhood with an abusive relationship. "It's my most autobiographical work – with a little bit of drama thrown in," Madonna told *Cosmopolitan* in 1989: "It's boring to be completely autobiographical."

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvVvN0QvzTk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvVvN0QvzTk)



Madonna postponed her touring plans for *Like A Prayer* so that she could appear in *Dick Tracy* with Warren Beatty



© Sunset Boulevard/Carbis via Getty Images

"I guess the image gets in the way... I'm not going to put a sticker on the front of the record saying: 'Listen, I wrote these songs!'"

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am I supposed to do? The information is on the label. If they don't read it, that's not my problem. I'm not going to put a sticker on the front of the record saying: 'Listen, I wrote these songs!' People will pay attention to what they want to pay attention to."

After *Like A Prayer*'s delivery amidst a blaze of publicity and controversy, Madonna more-or-less disappeared from public view. Having made the difficult decision to postpone plans to tour *Like A Prayer* that summer so that she could play femme fatale Breathless Mahoney in *Dick Tracy*, pop's most controversial star spent much of 1989 ensconced in the unlikelyst of locations – the Disney studios.

With Madonna unavailable to promote the album, the success of *Like A Prayer*'s subsequent singles was reliant on a string of groundbreaking videos from directors Mary Lambert, David Fincher and

Herb Ritts (see the boxout on this page).

The care and effort Madonna expended when visually presenting her work was suitably rewarded at that year's MTV Video Music Awards, where she made her only public appearance of the era to perform *Express Yourself* and pick up a string of gongs, including Artist Of The Decade and the Viewer's Choice Award for *Like A Prayer*.

Ironically, the latter was sponsored by Pepsi, whom Madonna thanked in her acceptance speech "for causing so much controversy".

Although the controversy is one of the more memorable aspects of the era, *Like A Prayer*'s real strength lies in the music itself. By revealing her vulnerability and her strength in a pure, brutally honest way, she had created a body of work that would shape her artistry from this point of her career onwards. ■



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## BANANARAMA WITH NORMSKI

"When Bananarama announced their reunion with Siobhan in April 2017, I managed to blag an audience ticket for their interview on The One Show. As I had met them several times before, Sara recognised me and called out 'Normski'. Once the show went off air, I had a chat with them - someone from the BBC tried to intervene but Keren told them we were 'just saying hello' and they backed off. Even though I had been told I wasn't allowed a photo, Sara asked someone to take it anyway. I told Sara she had no idea how much it meant to me and she said, 'Oh I think I do!'. It was one of the best days of my life and they all signed my 7" record of Aie A Mwana, their first single. I then went on to see them live nine times over the course of their reunion and even made it onto their live DVD!"

## JULIA FORDHAM WITH PAV FOXX

"Here I am with the amazing Julia Fordham during the Porcelain 25 Tour in 2015. I got her to sign my VHS copy at the stage door of Leeds City Varieties. I told Julia I was her biggest fan and was influenced by her music and percussion. She then invited me to play on the rest of the tour."



## SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR WITH ADRIAN KEEBLE

"Here I am with Sophie Ellis-Bextor when I met her at the Royal Festival Hall on 3 October. She was impressed with my Soft Cell T-shirt, although I felt bad I wasn't wearing a SEB one. She has a lovely, warm character and put everyone at ease. The show was brilliant, too. I can't wait for her tour in 2019."



## LEO SAYER WITH JEREMY HUNT

"This photo of myself with Leo Sayer was taken on his tour earlier this summer at the Cheese & Grain in Frome, Somerset, on 20 July. Leo had just come off stage after an amazing show and was heading to his merchandise stall to sign CDs and T-shirts. He made time for a quick chat and thanked me for coming along to the gig. He commented on how hot it was since it was in the middle of that lovely summer weather. I replied that living in Australia, surely he should be used to the heat!"







# THIS MEANS EVERYTHING TO ME

ALTHOUGH HE RECENTLY REACHED RETIREMENT AGE, MIDGE URE IS DETERMINED NOT TO SLOW DOWN. WANTING TO COMPENSATE FOR YEARS LOST TO ALCOHOL, THE MAN BEHIND ULTRAVOX, VISAGE AND BAND AID REVEALS HOW HE'S STILL FIGHTING TO OVERCOME HIS BOYBAND PAST.

JOHN EARLS

Asked which song casts a shadow over Midge Ure's life, most people would probably guess at Ultravox's *Vienna* – the all-time runner-up single which lost out on No. 1 to Joe Dolce's *Shaddap You Face* – or *Do They Know It's Christmas?*, the best-selling single of all time in Britain, which Midge co-wrote with Bob Geldof: he's told *Classic Pop* before how the time spent working on Band Aid and Live Aid lost Ultravox crucial momentum and helped contribute to their demise.

Instead, Midge is frustrated at the effect that his brief spell in proto-boyband Slik has on his career, 42 years after the bubblegum popsters spent a week at No. 1 with *Forever And Ever*. Midge is a calm and thoughtful interviewee, generally good-humoured about his status in the music industry. But whenever he mentions Slik, he gets just a little twitchy. "With first the Rich Kids and then Visage, the media held it against me that I was 'that guy from Slik'," he sighs. "I felt this weight lugging around with me that was never going to go. There aren't many

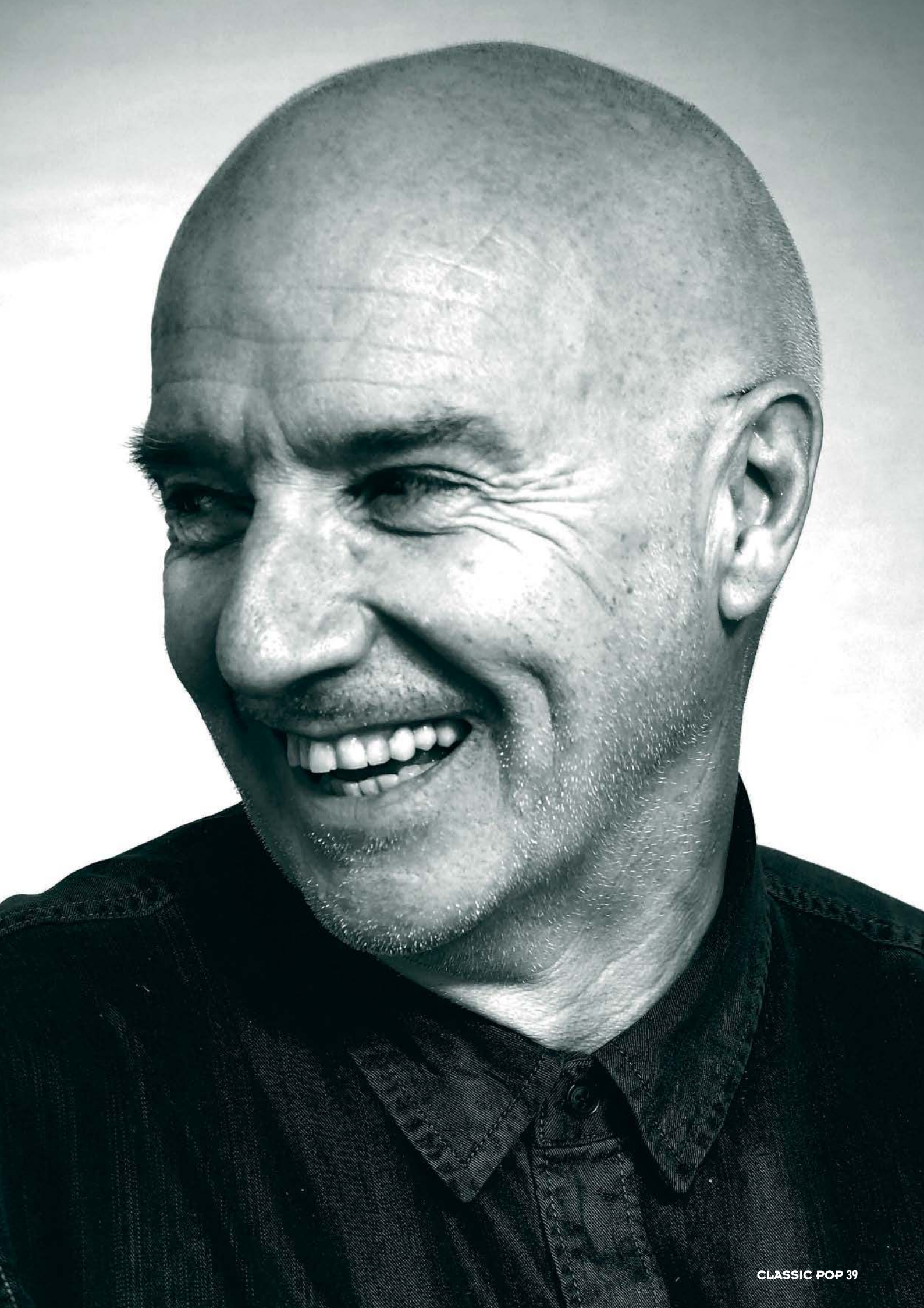
artists who started out in the world I did who were allowed to grow up and do anything worthy: Gary Barlow, Robbie Williams, George Michael. All these years later, I still feel sometimes the respect given to me is begrudging, because of this one hit from 1976."

Although few people under 50 remembers *Forever And Ever*, Midge seethes about one Radio 2 DJ – almost certainly Chris Evans – who plays the hit whenever Midge guests on his show. "He does it as a put-down and you think, 'What's the point? Why do that?' Once you're tarred with that brush, it's very difficult to walk away from it, and the only thing that helps is the passage of time.

"For a long time, George Michael was pigeonholed as the guy in the hotpants dancing by the side of the pool in *Club Tropicana*. George was at the top for the majority of his career, whereas mine has had many dips and dives, but it's the same emotional kick: you feel like the underdog, a second-class citizen." He laughs ruefully. "Maybe it's the Scot in me talking."

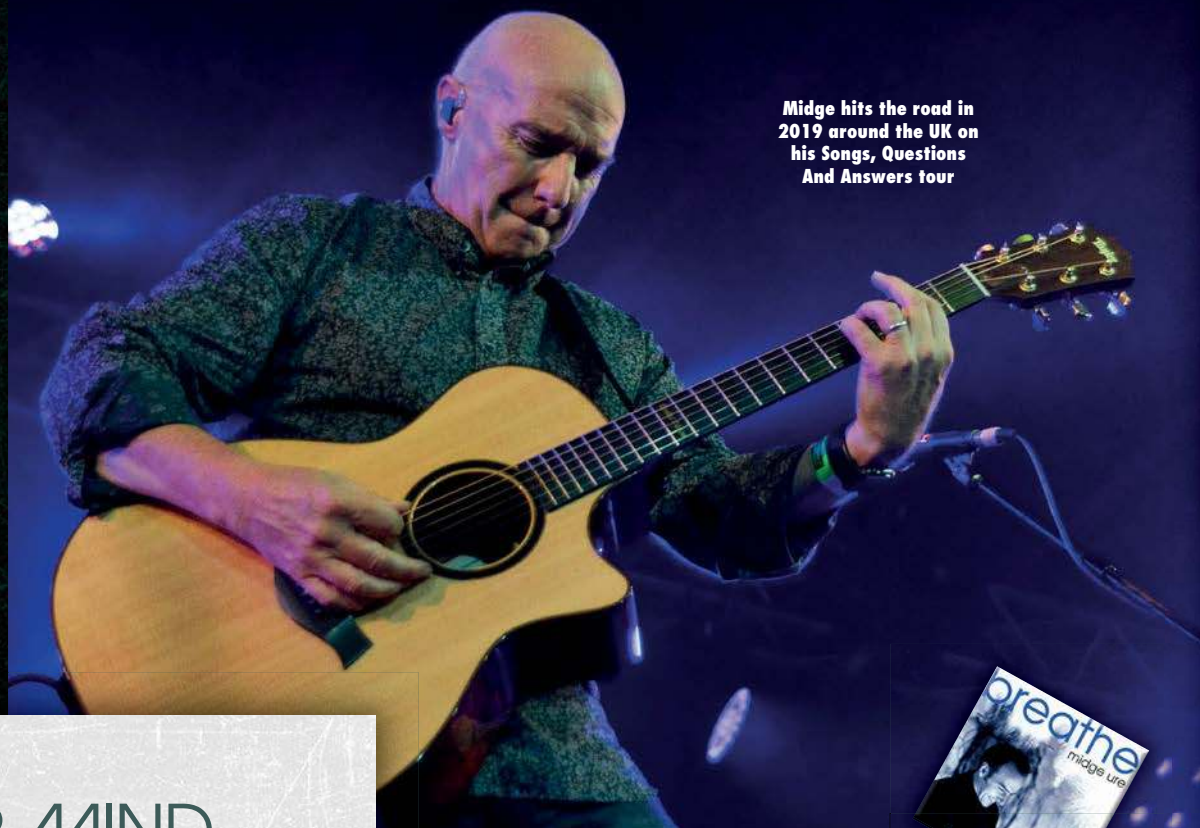








**POP\_UP** Midge sees Ultravox's influence in a lot of current music, saying: "We can all hear Ultravox and that genre's music in general in The Killers. And Muse have definitely listened to a few Ultravox albums in their time."



**Midge hits the road in 2019 around the UK on his Songs, Questions And Answers tour**

## NEVER MIND THE BOIL-VOX

Shortly after joining Slik in 1975, Midge was approached at the Glasgow musical-instrument shop where he was still working by Malcolm McLaren and his friend Bernie Rhodes, future manager of The Clash. They asked if Midge wanted to join a band McLaren was putting together. Midge said no – and it wasn't until August that year that John Lydon was asked to join the nascent Sex Pistols.

"It was very easy to say no to Malcolm's offer," says Midge. "I had no idea what they were after, and I don't think they did, either. They knew visually what they wanted, but the music wasn't even mentioned."

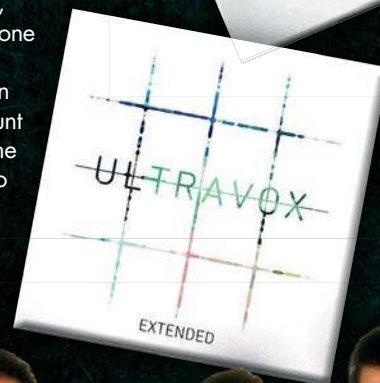
Midge was recently on Pistols' guitarist Steve Jones' US radio show and was reminded of a postscript to his encounter with McLaren. "I was telling Steve how Malcolm sold me a knock-off amp at the end of our meeting, and Steve said: 'You fucker, I stole that! I never knew Malcolm had sold it!' That's bizarre – I never joined the Sex Pistols, but I did buy their amp."

Despite McLaren's 80s success with the albums *Duck Rock* and *Fans*, the pair's paths didn't cross again. "Malcolm's name was batted about a lot, especially by Glen Matlock in The Rich Kids," says Midge. "I watched his progress, and I was in awe of his hip-hop side with *Buffalo Gals*. I thought, 'This guy is a genius.' But I can't remember ever bumping into him again, and with his personality, I'm sure I'd remember if I had."

### BREATH AND TAXES

Midge has driven more-or-less constantly forwards, but he admits that professionally, he's only recently fully recovered from the fallout of alcoholism. He's been sober since 2005, having curtailed a decade of heavy drinking exacerbated by a combination of the failure of his 1996 album *Breathe* and a six-figure tax bill. Although Ultravox unexpectedly reformed 10 years ago, Midge is horrified he's only released one solo album of new songs – 2014's acclaimed *Fragile* – since *Move Me* in 2000. "14 years is a ridiculous amount of time not to put new material out," he says. "But I wasn't in the right place to do it. I went through all the shit with alcohol, I lost my way and it turned into a complete nightmare... I was ecstatic with *Fragile*, because 10 years before, I didn't think I'd be able to come up with anything. I was lost, and I didn't really want to do anything. What I went through was fantastic subject matter for songs, but it was less good for my career timeline."

The prog-tinged *Fragile* had some of Midge's career-best reviews and was followed by 2017's *Orchestrated*, orchestral reworkings of some of his classics. "It took 18 months to get the *Orchestrated* arrangements right, and that was time nicked from new material,"





# "ULTRAVOX ONLY WORKS NOW IN LITTLE SNIPPETS. BRILLIANT LEFT THE DOOR OPEN WHEN IT WAS FIRMLY LOCKED."

bassist Chris Cross occasionally "to muck about with technology", but hasn't spoken much to Currie or LA-based drummer Warren Cann.

## THE SYNTH WARS

Barring that reunion, Midge has been solo since he left Ultravox 30 years ago. But he's one of music's great collaborators, having worked with everyone from Alice Cooper to Kate Bush and speaks fondly of hanging out with Paul Young on their joint US tour this summer. He's also recently played two shows with Rich Kids, the punks he formed after Slik with Glen Matlock following the bassist's departure from the Sex Pistols. The band initially reformed to raise money for terminally ill guitarist Steve New, playing again after his passing with Gary Kemp on guitar.

"It was great leaving it the way we did," muses Midge. "Being called the Rich Kids when we're now in our 60s makes it difficult for an audience to swallow, and singing about the Anti-Nazi League at this late stage might not go down particularly well. But the shows were great, everything Rich Kids shows should be: mad, under-rehearsed, powerful, slightly out of tune and exciting." He notes another reason not to play further Rich Kids shows: "Technology broke us up in the first place, when I bought a synthesiser, which Glen and Steve absolutely hated. Would I be going against everything I stood for back then?"

That Midge still has strong feelings about the synth wars 40 years on is testament to the passion that burns for the music he made with Visage and Ultravox after the Rich Kids split. Midge and Rich Kids drummer Rusty Egan formed Visage as a studio-based project, intending them to be a collective for like-minded musicians to drop by rather than a regular band. First to heed the call were Billy Currie, Magazine trio Barry Adamson, John McGeoch and Dave Formula, and New Romantic face Steve Strange. "I was still carrying the dregs of Slik on my shoulders," Midge explains. "But being accepted by guys like that felt like the invisible wall between me and any form of musical creativity had just disappeared. They didn't care what Slik had been. Slik were always in teen magazines like *Jackie* and I don't think Barry Adamson read those. If you get guys together like that Visage line-up, something interesting is always going to happen."

Ultravox had split following three commercially ho-hum albums, but during the sessions for Visage's self-titled debut LP, Currie persuaded Ultravox fan

Midge in his Ultravox pomp. His initial stint lasted between 1979 and 1988.

An image from this David Bailey shoot was used for the recent *Extended Ultravox* collection

laughs Midge. "Every time I'm not on tour, I'm in the studio at the bottom of my garden, twiddling knobs and making noises. I'm determined not to let it be 14 years again. I don't know what the subject matter will be or how it'll sound until I'm finished, though. *Fragile* took such a long, long time that I'm surprised it's so coherent."

The only thing certain about Midge's next record is that it won't be with Ultravox. Well, almost certainly not. Midge sounds as unsure as any fan when asked about the status of the band, on hiatus since 2014 with multi-instrumentalist Billy Currie announcing his departure last year. "I don't know where Ultravox stands and there's no talk of doing anything in the future," he says. Making 2012 comeback album *Brilliant* was a surprise for the band, with the idea of doing a new record a huge step on from reuniting in 2009 simply for a tour. "Ultravox only works now in little snippets," he explains. "We did something we're very proud of with *Brilliant*, and it's left the door open when it was firmly locked. The idea of Ultravox doing a new album every two years or a hits tour every two years is abhorrent. But if a film soundtrack or a theatre piece, something different, came along and sparked our imaginations, then why wouldn't we do that? We've proved we still have a spark between the four of us." He sees





Midge onstage with Cole Stacey and Joseph O'Keefe, who also form the folk duo India Electric Co.

Midge to revive the band, with Midge singing in place of the newly solo John Foxx. Both Visage and Ultravox – who had been dropped by Island – were skint. To earn some cash, Midge played keyboards with Thin Lizzy, who shared management with Ultravox. It meant that, in 1979, Midge was in three bands at once. So was Currie, who went on tour with Tubeway Army. “Only the naivety of youth let us get away with that,” shrugs Midge. “If you’d read the synopsis of what was going on first, you’d never have done it. You have to be very green and very, very keen to see beyond how much of a hindrance everything was, in order to be inspired by working with all these great musicians. By being guns for hire, me and Billy were able to reboot Ultravox.”

### RECURRING THEME

Although he was never officially in Thin Lizzy, Midge stayed friends with Phil Lynott, co-writing *Yellow Pearl* for the singer’s debut solo album *Solo In Soho* in 1980. It led to an approach from *Top Of The Pops* producer Michael Hurll for Lynott to write a new theme for the show “a bit like *Yellow Pearl*”. Lynott suggested he simply get Midge to remix *Yellow Pearl* instead, which became *Top Of The Pops*’ theme for five years from 1981. “I’m sure we acted casually at the time and went: ‘Oh aye, that’s nice,’” smiles Midge. “But inside, your teenage self is screaming ‘Waaaay! We’ve got *Top Of The Pops*!’ They used a Led Zeppelin soundalike as the theme when I watched it as a kid, and now me and Phil were the new Led Zeppelin. It was a massive moment.”

By then, two albums in, Visage were on the verge of imploding. “Visage was never meant to be more than

“VISAGE WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE MORE THAN BEING IN THE STUDIO TO MAKE ELECTRONIC DANCE-POP”

being in the studio to make electronic dance-pop. Instead, it became a circus. Success breeds leeches, who whisper in people’s ear: ‘You don’t need him’ and ‘You should be in movies’. I thought, ‘I don’t need any of this stuff’ and walked away.”

Focusing solely on Ultravox, Midge’s first album with the band was *Vienna*, whose title track was the fifth best-selling single of 1981, despite Joe Dolce. A 2012 Radio 2 poll voted it the best song ever to reach No.2. “Nobody saw *Vienna* as a great song until it was a hit,” says Midge. “Once it was a hit, everyone went: ‘Of course it was always going to be huge.’ No it wasn’t! It was a fluke.”

Midge is proud that such an offbeat song was so massive, and it gave Ultravox power over their record label whenever the band suggested other leftfield single choices. “Once people were given the opportunity to hear *Vienna* and this long, meandering song became a success, you’re allowed to say: ‘Lament should be a single’ when the record company is suggesting *White China* would be easier to sell. All we did in Ultravox was come up with interesting pieces of music. It’s someone else’s job to sell it to the public. And surely that’s what makes a success – the best piece of music, not the most easily accessible.”

### DAYS OF URE

Although proud to have been at the vanguard of synth-rock, Midge feels Ultravox’s reputation as, in his words, “The guys behind all the synthesisers” is too simplistic, emphasising: “It wasn’t about using technology, it was about striving to make interesting music. Someone asked me recently about why there were no guitars on the *Vienna* album, and you think, ‘Really? Have you listened to it?’ There’s guitars all over

**POP UP** It wasn’t just Joe Dolce’s Shaddap You Face that kept *Vienna* from No.1. For the first of its four weeks at No.2, it was John Lennon’s *Woman* that beat *Vienna* to the top.





# KATE IN EDEN

Midge's first solo album after leaving Ultravox, *Answers To Nothing*, features a major coup – a rare guest vocal by Kate Bush, who sings as the sister in *Sister And Brother*. After Midge's approach, Bush said she'd send a vocal contribution back if she had time. At that point, she was in the middle of recording her album *The Sensual World*. "I wasn't expecting Kate to do anything at all, or that she'd take months if she could help," Midge admits. "Then she phoned up a week later and said: 'I've done something, do you want to come to my studio to hear it?'"

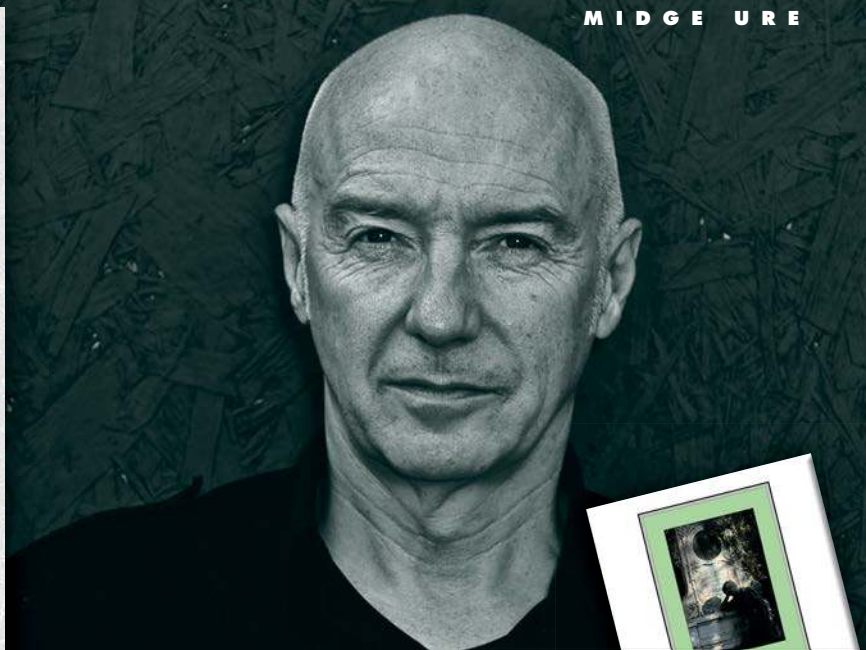
Having turned her vocals around so quickly, Midge was ready for Bush's contribution to be two or three lines; probably her sister character answering the brother's questions. Instead, Bush had multi-tracked the vocals with effects Midge calls "all these wonderful Kateisms", including a choral section at the end of the song.

"It was glorious," enthuses Midge. "My only regret is that I didn't see Kate at work to see how she'd done it. Hearing someone like Kate Bush pour their heart and soul into one of my songs was an incredible affirmation. It was, 'Well done you, we're giving you a gold star for your essay.' I was shocked she'd taken so much time and effort."

Having that mutual respect from someone so highly regarded helped convince Midge he was following the right path. He says: "I realised I didn't have to be aiming for three-minute pop songs, that I could make pieces of music I love, even if nobody else gets it."

that album, but we happened to use a variety of instrumentation." That carried on until 1986's final album *U-Vox*, their first since Midge had been involved in first Band Aid and then Live Aid. "That took me away from the band for a long time," he recalls. "When I got back and listened to what the other guys had been doing while I'd been away, I was hugely underwhelmed. The best bands need all four elements there, and without any one of them you become like a table with a leg removed."

It wasn't just Midge who had been missing, however – Warren Cann had been sacked for wanting Ultravox to go further into electronics. "That just shows you how much of a mess we were," admits Midge. "By removing one of the band's key elements, we thought we'd be stronger somehow. It was all just bizarre. Maybe we should have just ridden that weird *U-Vox* period out, as it was back in the days when record companies gave you the luxury of having one dud album. But what *Brilliant* showed us years later is how the four of us work as a unit. We used more-modern equipment, we hadn't made a record in 25 years – and yet it still sounded eerily just like Ultravox. [We] should have moved into soundtracks, like Tangerine Dream did. But we were only ever offered one soundtrack, and that was for a sci-fi porn movie."



Before *U-Vox*, Midge had already tested his solo career, making *The Gift*. Its lead single *If I Was* reached No.1, but the album peaked at No.2. "I was more gutted *The Gift* didn't get to No.1 than *Vienna*," Midge admits.

Although determined that making interesting music should be an artist's sole concern, Midge believes he initially strayed too far from pop in his solo career. "I got too serious and po-faced about subjects," he suggests. "I became too anti the idea of a three-minute pop song, until I became something I wasn't. I made mistake after mistake, until I realised it was no longer mistakes, but that I was back doing the music I should be doing. And by then, I didn't have the same audience Ultravox has."

It's this level of honesty and insight that audiences can expect on Midge's next headline solo tour. As its title suggests, *Songs, Questions And Answers* will see Midge take questions from the audiences, as well as requests for any song from his career. "That kind of unrehearsed, loose performance is the antithesis of what people usually see these days," he enthuses. "It'll be raw, rough and ready. I really like the cheeky crowds, the ones who ask: 'Hey, Midge, what happened to Mary and Mungo?'"

"Going through my catalogue to prepare for such a tour is the only time I listen to my own stuff. Sometimes I find old songs that really stand up and I'll think, 'How did I possibly write that when I was only 25?' And there are other songs where you just go, 'Man, that's so disappointing.'"

It'll be Midge's first tour since he became a pensioner, having turned 65 in October. Did it feel like a milestone? "When you're young, you look down the telescope of life the wrong way, as everything looks ridiculously far away. But when you get to this age, you look down that telescope and the past is so close to you that it's frightening. But that cliché of 'Inside I'm only 25' is sadly true! The body lets you down in various ways, but the spirit is still of the same guy who travelled down from Glasgow to join the Rich Kids in 1977. In that respect, nothing has changed." ■



**STOP PRESS!**  
Midge has just announced  
The 1980 Tour with Band  
Ultravox's *Vienna* album in full  
plus highlights from Visage's  
eponymous debut LP. Dates  
start in October 2019 and tickets  
are available from [nvtte.com/](http://nvtte.com/)  
[community/MidgeUre](http://community/MidgeUre)



## Do They Know It's Christmas?

**BAND AID (MERCURY)**

The stats for this historic moment in pop make for impressive reading. Do *They Know It's Christmas?*

sold one million copies in

its first week and, by the end of 1984, had shifted three million. Until Elton John's remake of *Candle*

*In The Wind* as a tribute to Princess Diana, this

was the biggest-selling single of all time in the UK,

overtaking *Mull Of Kintyre* by Wings. Reaching

No.1 in 13 countries outside the UK, co-writer

Bob Geldof's initial hope was that the single

would raise £70,000 for famine relief in Ethiopia.

In actual fact, within a year of its release it had

raised £8 million. With new personnel, the song

has gone on to be re-recorded three times (1989,

2004 and 2014), each time topping the charts

afresh. The pop art sleeve is by Peter Blake, of

course – best known for the *Sgt Pepper* cover.



## Like A Virgin

**MADONNA (SIRE)**

*Holiday* announced Madonna's arrival on the world stage but *Like A Virgin* was proof that

we were in the presence of the woman who

would become the dominant pop force of her

generation. Producer Nile Rodgers hated the

song – written by Tom Kelly and Billy Steinberg

– when he first heard it at the demo stage. But

after it stuck in his head for the next four days,

he realised its earworm potential and inherent

hookiness. Madonna, however, was never in any

doubt about the song's merits, recording it with

Rodgers at the Power Station studio in Manhattan.

Although the track only peaked at No.3 in the

UK, it was her first

chart-topper in the US,

and the video, which

featured Madonna in a

wedding dress vamping

it up around the canals

of Venice, would go on

heavy rotation on MTV

across the globe.



CLASSIC

POP

# TOP TEN

WEEK ENDING **05 JAN 1985**

TWO FESTIVE CLASSICS, FRANKIE GET ANTHEMIC, AN ICONIC SOUNDTRACK HIT AND ONE OF MACCA'S MOST DIVISIVE SINGLES BATTLE IT OUT FOR CHART SUPREMACY

STEVE HARNELL

## 1 (1) Do They Know It's Christmas?

**BAND AID (PHONOGRAM)**

4TH WEEK ON CHART

## 2 (2) Last Christmas / Everything She Wants

**WHAM! (EPIC)**

4TH WEEK ON CHART



## Last Christmas/ Everything She Wants WHAM! (EPIC)

The most hardy of festive perennials, *Last Christmas* has charted on 12 separate

occasions since it was

first released in December 1984. Shifting almost

two million copies, it's the biggest-selling single

in UK chart history not to make it to No.1. A

perfect yin and yang contrast between a perky,

upbeat melody and heartbreaking, lovelorn lyrics,

George Michael played every single instrument

on the song. The track's ski resort video has

become equally iconic over the years. George's

intention to bag the coveted Christmas No.1 slot

was intended as a straight shootout with their

main competitor, Frankie Goes To Hollywood,

only for Band Aid to blow both of them out of the

water. Michael did, of course, feature prominently

on the charity single, so his presence at numbers

one and two won the day.

## We All Stand Together

**PAUL MCCARTNEY**

**AND THE**

**FROG CHORUS**

**(PARLOPHONE)**

If I had a tenner for

every time I've defended

this over the years from

people carping it doesn't compare favourably

with the great man's songwriting with The

Beatles, I'd be richer than Macca himself. We

all *Stand Together* forms the centrepiece of a

13-minute animated film, *Rupert And The Frog*

Song, written and produced by McCartney

and based on the comic strip character, Rupert

The Bear. The short film, which alongside Sir

Thumbsalot, also featured the voices of the

wonderful Windsor Davies and June Whitfield,

was often shown before a feature-length big

screen project by Paul, the critically panned

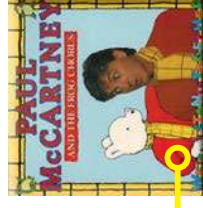
musical *Give My Regards To Broad Street*. On

its own merits, *We All Stand Together* is an

endearing anthem of unity. It's not *Hey Jude* or

*Helter Skelter*, but it's not meant to be – it's written

for primary school-age children. Get over it.







### Nellie The Elephant TOY DOLLS (VOLUME)

Two kids songs in the same Top 10? It must be the post-Christmas hangover. Hold on, though. In diametric

opposition to that other cutesy McCartney original track, this is a punk refit by Sunderland fourpiece Toy Dolls. You'll no doubt remember them from their evergreen classics *Yul Brynner Was A Skinhead* and *James Bond Lives Down Our Street*. Apart from their own material, the band regularly included novelty punk covers on their records, including *The Final Countdown*, *Blue Suede Shoes* and *Lazy Sunday*. Another stock-in-trade was the wholesale parody, for proof there's *The Kids In Tyne And Wear*, their inimitable refit of the Kim Wilde classic *Kids In America* and *The Devil Went Down To Scunthorpe*, the cover you never thought you needed in your life of country rocker *The Devil Went Down To Georgia* by the Charlie Daniels Band.

### 3 (3) We All Stand Together PAUL MCCARTNEY & THE FROG CHORUS (PARLOPHONE) 7TH WEEK ON CHART

### 4 (5) Like A Virgin MADONNA (SIRE) 8TH WEEK ON CHART

### 5 (4) Nellie The Elephant TOY DOLLS (VOLUME) 7TH WEEK ON CHART

### 6 (7) Ghostbusters RAY PARKER JR (ARISTA) 20TH WEEK ON CHART

### 7 (6) The Power Of Love FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD (ZTT) 6TH WEEK ON CHART

### 8 (10) Shout TEARS FOR FEARS (MERCURY) 6TH WEEK ON CHART

### 9 (9) Everything Must Change PAUL YOUNG (CBS) 5TH WEEK ON CHART

### 10 (11) I Want To Know What Love Is FOREIGNER (ATLANTIC) 5TH WEEK ON CHART



#### Everything Must Change PAUL YOUNG (CBS)

A classy slice of pop soul co-written by Young that features another instantly

recognisable wobbly Pino Palladino bassline and lifting pedal steel guitar backing from the estimable BJ Cole, super session man and a brief replacement for Nick McCabe when he left The Verve. *Everything Must Change* was the second Top 10 single from Young's second LP *The Secret Of Association*. It was followed by an even bigger hit, *Every Time You Go Away*, which made the Top 5 in February 1985.



#### I Want To Know What Love Is FOREIGNER (ATLANTIC)

A precision-tooled 80s power ballad par excellence. Thompson

Twin Tom Bailey plays keyboards here but it's the gospel contribution of the New Jersey Mass Choir that really steps things up several notches. There's been some quibbling over the years by songwriter Mick Jones about the contribution to the track's creation by singer Lou Gramm (Jones argues it was 5%, Gramm reckons it's more like 40%). Whatever the breakdown, this remains one of the 80s most heartrending anthems.



### Ghostbusters RAY PARKER JR (ARISTA)

We're massive fans of Stevie Wonder here at CP, but surely Ray Parker Jr's cracking title song to one of the 80s best popcorn movies

should have romped away with the Oscar for Best Original Song? Instead, the Academy gave the gong to *I Just Called To Say I Love You*. Who ya gonna call? How about the judges panel for a recount... Parker Jr wasn't the first choice as songwriter to pen the theme tune – instead director Harold Ramis approached Fleetwood Mac firebrand Lindsey Buckingham after the star contributed *Holiday Road* to *National Lampoon's Vacation*. Buckingham, fearing he was being pigeonholed as a Hollywood soundtrack himmaker, turned him down. The *Ghostbusters* theme was Parker Jr's peak as a solo artist. However, he remained an in-demand songwriter, producer, session vocalist and guitarist, working with a host of soul legends.

### Shout TEARS FOR FEARS (MERCURY)

On the face of it, you'd be forgiven for thinking that *Shout* was yet another extension of TFF's fascination with the primal scream therapy techniques of Arthur Janov that characterised their early work. In fact, it's Roland Orzabal's thoughts on the aftermath of the Cold War. *Shout's* B-side was the experimental sound collage that featured samples of Sally Field and William Prince from the 1976 TV movie *Sybil*, from which the band's album *Songs From The Big Chair* took its name. As well as being a signature tune for the band, *Shout* is the most remixed track in their back catalogue, with at least 15 decent versions doing the rounds. Widely covered by other artists, it

formed the basis of England's unofficial anthem for the 2010 World Cup, by Shout For England featuring James Corden and Dizzee Rascal. Although the least said about that, the better...



### The Power Of Love FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD (ZTT)

Frankie ticked a lot of boxes in the short time they were together – the establishment-baiting

*Relax*, the powerful anti-war polemic of *Two Tribes* and one of the 80s most distinguished ballads, *The Power Of Love*.

Despite its reputation as a Christmas song, festive references are notable by their absence in the lyrics. Instead, Holly Johnson's sonorous delivery of lines that include a reference to a character from the *Penelope Pitstop* cartoon series ("I'll protect you from the Hooded Claw") give the track an almost spiritual, hymnal quality. An original version that the band performed as part of a John Peel Session amped up its ironic qualities but was played at a snail's pace. When producer Trevor Horn got hold of it, he sped it up and added lush strings to increase the drama.







"WE REALLY  
THOUGHT OUR  
ALBUM-MAKING  
DAYS HAD FINISHED  
IN THE 80s, SO  
TO BE RECORDING  
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MIKE STOCK WAS A  
THRILL FOR US"

CHERYL BAKER







# Still Sparkling

AS RESILIENT AS EVER, THE FIZZ HAVE HAD A ROLLERCOASTER YEAR. WITH MEMBER JAY ASTON ON THE MEND AFTER A MAJOR HEALTH SCARE AND THE BAND NOW SLIMMED DOWN TO A TRIO, THEY NOW SERVE UP A FESTIVE TREAT OF A FEEL-GOOD CHRISTMAS ALBUM.

CHRISTIAN GILTENANE

Reboots are ten-a-penny these days. *Sabrina*, *The Teenage Witch* and *Dynasty* have been given a glossy makeover on Netflix and even *The Little Mermaid* is being handed a live-action reset. But one of the most heartwarming reboots to have taken place recently has to be the reinvention of 80s pop legends Bucks Fizz.

After years of ongoing legal action against old bandmate Bobby Gee, a variety of line-up changes and a multitude of carbon copy performances at retro gigs up and down the country, the well-loved pop combo comprising Cheryl Baker, Mike Nolan and Jay Aston has been given a brand new makeover.

Rebranding themselves as The Fizz in late 2017, the group added a new member to the line-up in the form of old pal and fellow 80s pop star Bobby McVey (who came complete with ready-made blond helmet hair). Then they teamed up with Mike Stock of SAW fame to work on their first proper original album in over 30 years.

The result – *The F-Z of Pop* – exceeded all expectations. The joyous long-player, which featured a mix of brand new songs and a handful of re-recorded Fizz classics, stormed the UK Top 30 and saw them receiving the kind of Radio 2 airplay most bands whose careers have spanned decades could only wish for.

While critics and fans were all pleasantly surprised by the group's new lease of life, it came as an even bigger shock to the band.

"We really thought our album-making days had finished in the 80s," a tickled Cheryl Baker tells *Classic Pop*. "So to be recording a fresh LP with someone as prestigious as Mike Stock was a thrill for us."

Bandmate Mike is in full agreement, adding that he thinks part of that success was down to the deft way Stock was able to capture and freshen up the band's trademark production style.

"He took our sound and brought it up to date," he says. "The studio is a very different place to the one we were in all those years ago. And when it came to producing us, he didn't have to do much with the vocals as it's still there."

The album's success – which gave them their highest chart position since their *Hand Cut* album in 1983 – was something that none of the group could have predicted. "We were thrilled by the success," Jay Aston, the youngest member of the band, gushes. "It was a big surprise as we didn't know what the response would be. It was a melting pot of styles to see where the whole thing was headed and the fans really loved it and got behind it."

## DARK CLOUDS LOOM

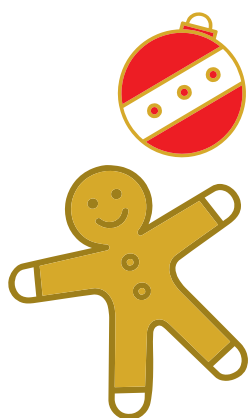
So far so good. And with a string of live shows planned and Cheryl Baker's high







**Mike Nolan and Cheryl Baker have always been the bubbly core of the group, being friends on and off the stage since the start**



profile stint on *Dancing On Ice* catapulting her into seven million homes every week, it looked like The Fizz were here to stay. But then the group was hit by two devastating blows.

The first was the news that Bobby McVey was quitting the band after just a few months. What is it with Bobbys and The Fizz, eh? But unlike the previous Bobby's disgruntled departure, McVey's was amicable and due to the fact he lived in the south of Italy with his family, which made the commute unbearable.

"Things were great with Bobby," Cheryl reminisces about the long-locked crooner who, in the 80s, had been in the Eurovision band Sweet Dreams. "In my opinion, we had the best line-up ever. He had a great personality and was a really lovely guy... apart from the fact he smoked! But from where he lives in Italy, it was taking him three

hours just to get to the nearest airport. So to get over here to the UK was a full day, which must have been tiring."

There was passing discussion about finding another member but Mike Stock reminded them that the public only ever really cared about the original members, so convinced them that they didn't need to find a replacement after all.

With that worry behind them, they were then faced with the second bombshell to rock the band.

In June, Jay was diagnosed with tongue cancer,



which came out of the blue for all involved and sparked fears about the future of the band.

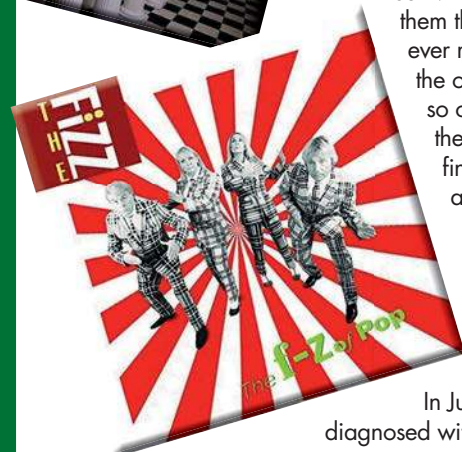
"When Jay told us the news, it felt like the rug had been pulled from under our feet," Cheryl says. "Not just because of our strong relationship with Jay and all that she was going through, but it could have also meant the end of the band. We were in limbo until the outcome of the operation, which could have been disastrous. So for a long time, we were in this terrible position, waiting to see what the result was going to be."

Of course, the whole situation was worse for Jay, who wasn't sure if she'd ever be able to sing again or even worse, overcome the condition. "I didn't know what the outcome was going to be," Jay says of that dark period. "It was an awful time for me, my husband and my daughter, who was just 15. You just never know how bad it is going to be. It was horrific, but I was

determined to carry on. I laid down some vocals so that I could mime at shows if I needed to and we started work on the Christmas album we released in November and tracks for our next proper album."

A week or so after her diagnosis, Jay underwent a seven-hour operation to remove lymph nodes and a section of her tongue, which was then reconstructed by surgeons using part of her upper thigh. She was then discharged 10 days after surgery and lived on soup. Then, in August, Jay was finally given the news we had been waiting for – the cancer was gone.

"I've got the all-clear now," Jay says, a light lisp the only after-effect of the surgery. "And I am so happy that I can get back to doing what I do best. I'm very lucky they caught it but I know that I will never really look the same, dance the same, or sound the same. I have noticed my voice is different. I suppose that's because my tongue is different."







Now slimmed to a trio, The Fizz have a Christmas album in the bag plus a further LP planned for 2019

who co-wrote *Home To My Heart* on *The F-Z Of Pop* and has released three solo albums. "We were accused of being a manufactured band but we wanted to write songs and just weren't allowed. Songwriting is my passion."

### NOT ALL FUN AND GAMES

It would seem that despite their glossy and fun public persona, behind the scenes, things had never really been great in Camp Fizz.

As Cheryl alluded to in our interview with the band last year, there were divisions within the group from the outset, which saw she and Mike constantly at loggerheads with bandmate Bobby Gee.

In our new chat, she is more honest about her constant battles with her former bandmate.

"There were rocky waters from day one," she remembers. "Bobby and I were like oil and water, we were never going to mix. Bobby hated the fact that I had more experience than him since I had done Eurovision before. When we entered the contest, our manager Nicola Martin said, 'Cheryl's done it before, listen to Cheryl.' But Bobby doesn't listen to women. Back then, it felt like he thought women made the tea. He may have changed since but that's how it was back then. He didn't want to answer to a woman."

While there was no love lost between Cheryl and Bobby, Mike admits he tried to keep the peace. Kind of. "I got on with Bobby, but he was just there," he chuckles. "When you work with someone, you make an effort. But he was always moaning while Cheryl and I were like a couple of lunatics and Jay was always very, very quiet. Bobby never agreed with anything."

Did the constant spats create a schism in the band? On stage, no, Cheryl tells us, but backstage all hell was let loose.

"The four of us worked very well together," Cheryl says. "On stage, Jay was amazing, but then offstage, she would go to her room and would rarely eat with us. She was just 19 when I was 27, so there was this massive age difference. At that age, it's like a woman working with a child. You only have to move on 10 years and age is immaterial but at that age, it was quite daunting to have the fame thing thrust upon us so quickly. I am not sure she coped with it particularly well. So Jay was a bit of a loner, Bobby drank tea and Mike and I were really close and still are."



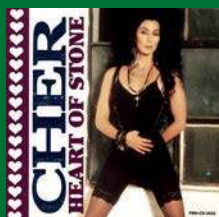
## Fizz Gets Covered

BUCKS FIZZ MAY NEVER HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED COOL BUT THAT DIDN'T MEAN THEIR SONGS WEREN'T WORTH COVERING. IN FACT, SOME MIGHTY BIG STARS ALSO GOT THEIR HANDS ON THEIR CLASSIC TRACKS.



**THE LAND OF MAKE BELIEVE**  
The magical track was a Christmas No.2 in 1981 and a chart-topper in the new year. Giving them their biggest smash, it

kicked off a run of huge hits for the band. But in 1988, Celine Dion – herself Eurovision alumni – covered the track in French, retitling it *A Quatre Pas D'ici*. Then in 2002, telly boy/girl pop band allSTARS marked the 20th anniversary release of the track by covering it and enjoying the biggest hit of their short-lived career.



**HEART OF STONE**  
The group released a song called *Heart Of Stone* in 1988 with Shelley Preston replacing Jay Aston. It reached No.40 but a year later, the Andy

Hill-written track was recorded by Cher, who took it to No.43 in the UK and No.20 in the US.

But with Jay now easing her way back into the band, The Fizz are looking forward to a fruitful 2019. After the release of their Christmas album back in November, fans can also look forward to a brand new album in the summer.

"This next record is going to be a lot better," Mike promises. "I feel so rejuvenated. Being in the studio is so different. We have a new lease of life."

Jay is just as enthusiastic. "There are some superb songs on there. We started working on it straight away after we finished our current record and I laid down a lot of vocals before I had my operation."

### TAKING STOCK

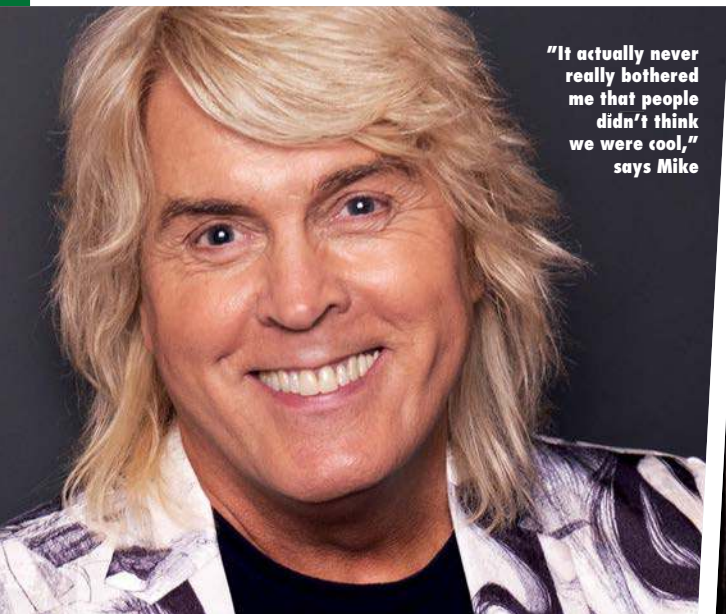
Clearly working with Mike Stock has been a pop marriage made in heaven. So how come this union of musical minds never took place back in the heady 80s?

Cheryl says that Mike told her during recording of the first album that Stock, Aitken & Waterman had actually wanted to work with them, but that it just never happened.

"I said to Mike, 'Were we not good enough for you?' and he said that back in the 80s, they had wanted to work with us but someone in our management said no. It's such a shame but better late than never."

Jay echoes this disappointment saying, as a songwriter, she was very frustrated early on in Bucks Fizz when their then management team refused to let them get involved in the production process. "We weren't really able to be creative," says Jay,





"It actually never really bothered me that people didn't think we were cool," says Mike

## Reboots Are Made For Walking

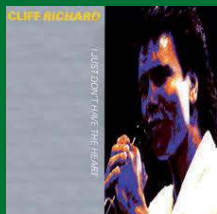
THE FIZZ AREN'T THE ONLY OLD SKOOLERS THAT MIKE STOCK HAS HELPED BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO – THESE LEGENDARY STARS HAVE ALSO WORKED WITH HIM



### DONNA SUMMER

In 1989, Mike, Matt Aitken and Pete Waterman produced the disco diva's critically-acclaimed album *Another Place And Time*, which was considered one of the SAW team's most accomplished albums, even if it did include songs originally recorded by Bill Wyman's

ex-wife Mandy Smith. The album featured the hits *This Time I Know It's For Real*, *I Don't Wanna Get Hurt* and *Love's About To Change My Heart*.



### CLIFF RICHARD

After years of performing soft-rock numbers, wishy-washy ballads and pumping out festive chart toppers, the man also known as the Peter Pan of Pop teamed up with SAW for his 101st single – *I Just Don't Have The Heart*, which made No.3.



### THE THREE DEGREES

The 70s disco divas tried to revive their career in the 80s with *The Heaven I Need*, produced by SAW. But the track never gave them the fresh success they desired, peaking at a disappointing No.42. The song was later reused by helium-voiced boyband Big Fun on their

1990 debut album, *A Pocketful of Dreams*.



After undergoing surgery for tongue cancer, Jay has since been given the all-clear



Jay says she remembers the behind-the-scenes battles clearly and admits that even at her youthful age, she thought the arguments were silly.

"There was a lot of politics in the band," she recalls. "There were two camps and I was always used as the deciding vote. I was the youngest and that made things difficult for me.

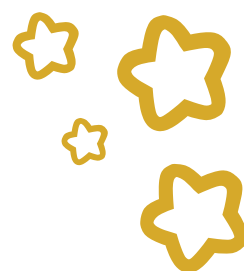
Mike and Cheryl would oppose Bobby no matter what and he would disagree with them, so I was in the middle of it all. It was all egos and control, which is what happens in most bands and, in our case, happened from the outset."



*The Land Of Make Believe*, Bucks Fizz's biggest-selling single with lyrics courtesy of King Crimson's Pete Sinfield

### BUBBLEGUM POP?

But it wasn't all bad for the group. While many readers will think their Eurovision debut, *Making Your Mind Up*, was their most popular song, it was actually the festive smash *Land Of Make Believe* that gave them their biggest-selling single. But many







other massive hits followed including *My Camera Never Lies*, *Run For Your Life*, *If You Can't Stand The Heat*, *When We Were Young* and many more.

Yet despite notching up big hits and developing a loyal fanbase, the band were never considered as cool as their contemporaries.

"Eurovision made us," Cheryl explains. "But it hung around our necks like a big weight and we weren't taken seriously. Maybe because we were put together but then, what is wrong with that? Why should the likes of Spandau Ballet and Duran Duran be seen as more credible than us? I might not play an instrument, but my voice is my instrument. I do all the harmonies for The Fizz and I'm good at it. I get very peeved by people who thought we were bubblegum pop. *Making Your Mind Up* might have been, but we moved away from that. *Piece Of The Action* was a great pop song, *My Camera Never Lies* – the production, writing, singing, performance are all brilliant."

Mike, on the other hand, didn't seem to care about any of that. "It actually never really bothered me that people didn't think we were cool," he says. "The guys never used to like us at the time, it was just girls. But now those guys come up to us with their wives who are Fizz fans and say, 'I have to admit that when I was young, I used to buy your albums but hide them.'"



**Christmas With The Fizz includes covers of classic festive tunes down the years plus some newly-minted originals**



## IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE

While they may not have been given the respect they deserved, their success still saw them travel around the world.

"It was a brilliant and absolutely wonderful life," Cheryl recalls. "The gigs were amazing, the countries we visited you couldn't imagine and we flew everywhere first class. I lived in a council flat but had gold discs on the wall and was being picked up by limousines. Up to then, all our clothes had been second-hand. Then suddenly, I'm in a band that is selling millions of records."

Cheryl admits that in those early days, they were very naïve about the business element. "What we didn't understand was that all those flights and fancy hotels had to be paid for by someone and that was us! The money came out of our royalties and had we known that, we would have quite happily flown economy or asked for a minicab. But it was wonderful."

Cheryl says she preferred to go back to her humble dwellings in East London after a hard day of being an international pop star. "I never bought a place in London when we got successful. So I would go home to my council flat in Bethnal Green. But when you're riding a wave, you get invited to swanky parties,

you're buying clothes you could never afford before. I had the great leveller of coming from a big and relatively poor family and having great mates, who I still see today. So when we were invited to some club where all the celebrities would be, I'd invite my school mates."

## WHAT CAME NEXT

As with every band, when the hits dried up, everyone found it hard to deal with. "When you have a flop single and people are not interested anymore, that's when the self-doubt kicks in," Cheryl notes. "You feel like you're a failure. The fact I was older and had had my knocks already, I was able to take it all on the chin. But it is hard when you have had three No. 1s and then the next single goes to No. 10 or doesn't even make the Top 40."

More bad luck followed when the band were involved in a horrific coach crash in 1984 which changed their lives forever.

Shortly after they'd recovered from the accident, Jay decided to leave the band and was courted by record labels for her to sign a solo deal. However, her old management apparently made sure these proposed deals never happened.

"I was offered solo record deals but they were warned off me by people who ran the band," she tells us. "I found out as it unfolded. I have a catalogue of things that nearly happened. That's just the way things have gone for me."

But now Jay and her bandmates can rest assured that with the production savvy of Mike Stock, The Fizz are enjoying something of renaissance and have a busy 2019 to look forward to.

"Next year, we are planning a tour," teases Cheryl. "But we're looking at the Christmas album we released in November as a two-year project. Next Christmas, there will be a second push of it so maybe we will do some shows to support it. The London Palladium would be nice. That said, in three years it will be our 40th anniversary and I'd love to do a big show at a place like the Palladium. We did a show there for our 30th and it was just great but I ended up crying because all of our fans were there. It was such a joyful time and I can't wait to enjoy it all again soon." ■

**Christmas With The Fizz is out now. A new studio album is also due in the summer of 2019.**





© Ed Carraff/Gaity Images

INARGUABLY THE ISLE OF MAN'S MOST SUCCESSFUL POP ACT OF ALL TIME – SHIFTING MORE THAN 220 MILLION RECORDS WORLDWIDE – THE BEE GEES FIRST FOUND FAME IN THE 60s, BEFORE GOING GLOBAL AT THE HEIGHT OF THE DISCO BOOM THE FOLLOWING DECADE

DAVID BURKE

## BEE GEES

**T**he brothers Gibb – Barry, Robin and Maurice – cut their musical teeth as The Rattlesnakes on the Manchester skiffle scene of the mid 50s, having relocated to the north of England metropolis from their native Isle of Man. But it was another move – this time to Australia – that birthed the Bee Gees, and the beginning of a glorious career spanning seven decades. Early triumphs down under included *Wine And Women* and *Spicks And Specks*. They returned to Blighty in 1967, at the behest of impresario Robert Stigwood, who, describing them as the year's "most significant new talent", signed them to Polydor Records.

Stigwood's faith in the siblings was validated almost immediately, as *New York Mining Disaster 1941* and *To Love Somebody* both made the lower reaches of the UK chart. Then came *Massachusetts*, their first No.1, repeated with *I've Gotta Get A Message To You* in 1968. The group were also establishing themselves in the United States; *I Started A*

*Joke* climbed to No.6 on the Billboard chart. The first half of the 70s was a relatively fallow period at home, although they did secure pole position in the US with *How Can You Mend A Broken Heart*.

The advent of disco was reflected on their albums *Main Course* and *Children Of The World*, both of which featured further American chart-toppers in *Jive Talkin'* and *You Should Be Dancing*. But even this was merely a preamble to the tour-de-force that was *Saturday Night Fever*. This was the biggest-selling soundtrack of all time, and with good reason, too, given the matchless majesty of *Stayin' Alive*, *More Than A Woman* and *How Deep Is Your Love*. It was the apogee of a movement that would soon be reduced to ashes, literally, as disco records were publicly burned in the US. In the 80s, *You Win Again* gave the Bee Gees their fifth and final UK No.1 (after *Night Fever* and *Tragedy*).

Barry Gibb remains the sole surviving member, following the deaths of Maurice in 2003, and Robin nine years later.



# THE MUST-HAVE ALBUMS



## MAIN COURSE

1975

### More of a starter

It was Eric Clapton who encouraged the Bee Gees to work on *Main Course* at Criteria Studios in Miami. Barry Gibb recalled: "Eric said, 'I've just made an album called *461 Ocean Boulevard* in Miami. Why don't you guys go to America and do the same, and maybe the change of environment will do something for you?' I think it was really good advice."

With Arif Mardin producing, the Bee Gees infused their sound with influences absorbed from Miami's contemporary dance-music scene and clocked up three US hits, among them a second No.1, *Jive Talkin'*. "We decided that it was our big chance to get serious about our music again," said Maurice. Reputedly, *Main Course* was the album that marked the debut of Barry's trademark falsetto.



## CHILDREN OF THE WORLD

1976

### Ramping up the disco vibe

No Arif Mardin this time out, so the Bee Gees – after a false start under Richard Perry – decided to helm their own production with the assistance of engineer Karl Richardson and musical adviser Albhy Galuten, a triumvirate that would oversee the group's halcyon period in the latter half of the decade. It certainly proved an astute move on *Children Of The World*, as the first single, *You Should Be Dancing*, topped the Billboard chart and was hailed by *Rolling Stone* magazine as "an impossibly propulsive track" that "rocks KC & The Sunshine Band's *Shake Your Booty* right off the turntable (or dancefloor)". They also ramped up the disco vibe with the likes of *You Stepped Into My Life*, *Boogie Child* and *Subway*.



## SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

1977

### Fever pitch

According to the late Robin Gibb, the Bee Gees were initially dismissive when Robert Stigwood commissioned them to write the *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack. "We were recording our new album in the north of France," he recalled, "and we'd written and recorded about four or five songs when Stigwood rang from LA and said: 'We're putting together this little film, low budget, called *Tribal Rites Of The New Saturday Nights* – would you have any songs on hand?' We said: 'Look, we can't, we haven't any time to sit down and write for a film.'" Well, they found the time, and the album went on to sell more than 45 million units, staying on the Billboard chart for some three years and spending 18 weeks at No.1 in the UK.



## SPIRITS HAVING FLOWN

1979

### Rivalling The Beatles

How do you follow an album like the Platinum-heavy *Saturday Night Fever*? With an album that puts you on a par with The Beatles, of course. *Spirits Having Flown* spawned three American No.1 singles – *Too Much Heaven*, *Tragedy* and *Love You Inside Out* – thus replicating the performance of *Saturday Night Fever*'s *How Deep Is Your Love*, *Stayin' Alive* and *Night Fever*, making it six consecutive chart-toppers, an unbroken run which equalled a record set by the Fab Four. This despite problems in the Gibb camp. Maurice was battling alcoholism and back pain, which reduced his contributions. Robin, too, found himself marginalised as a vocalist, with *Living Together* his only lead, the first time that was the case since 1970's *Cucumber Castle*.

## AND THE REST...



### E.S.P.

1987  
E.S.P. was the first Bee Gees album after a six-year

sabbatical, during which each of the Gibb brothers had embarked on solo projects and writing for other artists. Barry had even worked on several songs for *Staying Alive*, the sequel movie to *Saturday Night Fever*. On a new label, Warner Bros, they were reunited with Arif Mardin, though largely without their usual Midas touch.

The one exception was *You Win Again*, which claimed top spot in the UK, Ireland, Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Norway. While the brothers shared compositional duties, vocally it's Barry who dominates, anchoring eight tracks, including *Live Or Die (Hold Me Like A Child)*.



### ONE

1989  
The Bee Gees were in the early stages of recording

*One* in 1988, when the youngest Gibb brother, Andy, suddenly died as a result of myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle. The sessions were subsequently shelved until November.

What the grieving siblings eventually delivered was a melancholic collection, not least on *Wish You Were Here*, dedicated to Andy. There are moments of peerless pop, too, of course, such as *Bodyguard* and *Tokyo Nights*, while *One* "brought us back to US radio", declared Barry, adding, "a leading paper recently stated: 'The Bee Gees are capable of at least one more hit'. I don't believe that – I believe we could have at least two!"



### SIZE ISN'T EVERYTHING

1993  
After three albums on Warner Bros,

the Bee Gees were back at Polydor. And despite personal difficulties – Maurice was a recovering alcoholic, Barry's wife and prematurely born new daughter were suffering ill health, while their dad had also died – the brothers managed to create their best work of the decade.

There's a dance music reboot on *Paying The Price Of Love*, while the influence of ethereal Irish chanteuse Enya runs through *Heart Like Mine*. Barry reckoned *Blue Island*, dedicated to the children of the former Yugoslavia, was the "nicest track" they'd ever written. But the standout is *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, which gave the Bee Gees a Top Five hit in four successive decades.



### STILL WATERS

1997  
A roll call of heavyweight producers was

drafted in for *Still Waters*, the likes of Russ Titelman (Eric Clapton, Steve Winwood, George Harrison), David Foster (Celine Dion, Barbra Streisand, Natalie Cole), Hugh Padgham (Phil Collins, Sting) and the inimitable Arif Mardin.

This multiplicity of cooks did crowd the kitchen somewhat, serving up mostly bland fare. The exceptions are *Alone*, No.5 in the UK; the Christmassy *Miracles Happen* and the poignant ballad, *I Will*, overseen by Mardin. This is the Bee Gees on autopilot augmented by bells and whistles but as *Rolling Stone* pointed out, "Those close-knit brotherly harmonies still quaver and quake after all of these years."



## THE ESSENTIAL SINGLES



## HOW DEEP IS YOUR LOVE

1977

## Fans favourite

Voted the UK's favourite Bee Gees song by viewers of ITV, *How Deep Is Your Love* was supposedly earmarked for Yvonne Elliman, but she plumped for *If I Can't Have You* instead. Although he doesn't get a credit, keyboard player Blue Weaver had "a tremendous amount of input", claimed co-producer Albhy Galuten. Weaver suggested the strings and created the electric-piano part that forms the basis of the track. Barry admitted that "a lot of the textures were added on" and the final mix was "a little different than the way we wrote it".



## STAYIN' ALIVE

1977

## Survival on the mean streets

Seldom has the compound of sound and vision been more dynamic than in the opening sequence of the movie *Saturday Night Fever*, as John Travolta confidently struts his stuff through a run-down neighbourhood while *Stayin' Alive* plays over the credits. It's a defining moment in cinema and possibly the defining moment of the disco era. But don't be fooled by the pulsating rhythm – this is a song with a dark undercurrent "about survival in the streets of New York", Robin Gibb asserted. "People crying out for help – desperate songs. Those are the ones that become giants."



## NIGHT FEVER

1977

## Movie inspiration

The sixth single from the *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack became the Bee Gees' first simultaneous No. 1 on both sides of the Atlantic. Robert Stigwood approached the Gibbs to pen a song for a film he was producing at the time with the working title *Saturday Night* but since the Bee Gees already had *Night Fever*, they convinced Stigwood to commit to that – and even change the name of the movie to *Saturday Night Fever* along the way. The song's string intro was inspired by Percy Faith's *Theme From A Summer Place*, which had been released way back in 1959.



## TOO MUCH HEAVEN

1978

## UNICEF gift

*Too Much Heaven* was the Bee Gees' offering to the Music For UNICEF Concert: A Gift Of Song show at the United Nations General Assembly, New York in 1979, before finding its way onto the *Spirits Having Flown* album and the top of the US singles chart. The story goes that Barry, Robin and Maurice wrote this, along with *Tragedy* and Andy Gibb's *Shadow Dancing*, during an afternoon off from shooting their *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* movie. The recording features an astonishing nine layers of three-part harmonies, a memorable 27 voices in all.

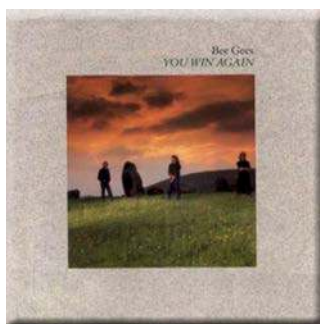


## TRAGEDY

1979

## Thunderclap Gibb

The chorus, full of high-pitched intensity, is probably one of the most parodied entries in the Bee Gees' oeuvre – and there have been many. The fifth of six US chart-toppers in a row, *Tragedy* wouldn't have sounded out of place on *Saturday Night Fever*. No coincidence, then, that it was added to the score of a West End theatre version. In a 1979 NBC special, Barry revealed the mundane provenance of the thunderclap effect – he just cupped his hands over a mic and made an explosion with his mouth.



## YOU WIN AGAIN

1987

## Signal song

"We absolutely thought *You Win Again* was going to be a big hit. It took us a month to cut it and get the right mix," Robin told John Kutner and Spencer Leigh in the book, *1000 UK Number One Hits*. This conviction wasn't in any way misplaced – *You Win Again* gave the Bee Gees their first UK No. 1 since 1979. Warner Bros had tried repeatedly to persuade the Bee Gees to remove the stomps from the recording, but they weren't having any of it. "As soon as you hear it on the radio, you know it's us. It's a signal," said Maurice.

## ONLY FOR THE BRAVE



## LIVING EYES 1981

Only Germany really embraced *Living Eyes* – an album that failed to make much of an impression in the rest of the world. The Bee Gees themselves weren't particularly impressed either, with Robin describing the album as "a turkey" and the brothers noting that it was a result of label pressure to put something new out.



## NEED TO KNOW

● In 1967, Robin and his then wife-to-be Molly survived one of Britain's worst-ever train disasters, when a Sunday evening express service from Hastings to London derailed and hit a bridge. 49 people were killed, but Robin pulled Molly through a smashed window to safety.

● The Bee Gees' 1970 album, *Cucumber Castle*, was recorded by Barry and Maurice as a duo, Robin

having quit after a falling out over the previous year's *Odessa*. The siblings kissed and made up for *Trafalgar* in 1971.

● The Bee Gees weren't even involved in *Saturday Night Fever* until the post-production phase. "They weren't even in the movie in the beginning," noted John Travolta, adding that while it was being filmed, "I was dancing to Stevie Wonder and Boz Scaggs."



# THE MUST-WATCH VIDEOS

## STAYIN' ALIVE

[youtu.be/I\\_izvAbhExY](https://youtu.be/I_izvAbhExY)

Those threads, that hair – positively leonine in Barry's case. The brothers Gibb make their way through an abandoned subway terminal set at MGM Studios, adjacent to the one where *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* was being filmed at the same time, attempting to replicate Travolta's swagger in the opening salvo of *Saturday Night Fever*. It has a certain cool, but it's not Tony Manero cool. Then there's some silliness as each of the siblings are framed by various apertures, before their strut becomes a stroll and Barry slings a silver jacket over his shoulder. The location now resembles a post-apocalyptic tableau... and that's it, really. Nothing much else happens. But then, who cares? Since the video is all about the song, it's always eminently watchable.



## HOW DEEP IS YOUR LOVE

[youtu.be/XpqqjU7u5Yc](https://youtu.be/XpqqjU7u5Yc)

Watching the promo for *How Deep Is Your Love*, the first thing you notice is the lighting – big primary-coloured blotches swooning in a clichéd but charming approximation of what it feels like to be caught up in the rapture of love, as a certain Anita Baker once exulted. You can keep your 21st-century technological spectacle – give us a few basic rigs and an enterprising cameraman/woman any day. Then throw in the Bee Gees drawing attention not to themselves but to the song, and all's right with the world.

As on *Stayin' Alive*, they walk their way through most of the video (they were fit boys, those Gibbs, in their prime). There are occasional headshots, with Barry in particular staring deeply down the lens.



## YOU WIN AGAIN

[youtu.be/xviuC-0FwQ0](https://youtu.be/xviuC-0FwQ0)

The stomping intro is accompanied by a montage of baffling, bizarre and just plain banal imagery, all of which was *de rigueur* for 80s pop videos – assorted symbols (an ampersand, question mark, etc), rolling dice, the compulsory black cat and, ahem, a rock formation. Then, as we're still trying to figure out what the hell is going on, what, if anything, is being conveyed here, the performance element kicks in. The Bee Gees doing their thing on a soundstage is a far more interesting proposition than spliced footage of the female protagonist messing about and pouting.

What's especially striking is how damn urbane the Gibbs look, Barry swapping his wavy tresses for a trendy ponytail, Robin in a beret and Maurice at ease with his middle-aged skin.



## ALONE

[youtu.be/8tRuVcdKM9g](https://youtu.be/8tRuVcdKM9g)

There were actually two promotional videos shot for *Alone*, both directed by Nick Egan, a visual-design artist, whose most notable commissions previously included the cover art for The Clash's *White Man In Hammersmith Palais* and Tommy Gun singles, and Dexys Midnight Runners' *Searching For The Young Soul Rebels* album.

The first finds the Bee Gees in a spinning room as a female astronaut peels off her space suit – a homage to 1968 cult sci-fi flick *Barbarella*.

The second is an archive medley, throwing up home movies of the Gibbs as children, them as seriously sideburned 60s-pop artisans and the unlikely pioneers of disco. All this is interspersed with them goofing around in the studio during the sessions for *Alone*.



In 1967, Robin and his then wife-to-be Molly survived one of Britain's worst-ever train disasters, when a Sunday evening express service from Hastings to London derailed and hit a bridge, killing 49 people

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Having been integral to the box-office bankability of Hollywood blockbuster *Saturday Night Fever*, the Bee Gees' own story is now poised for the big-screen treatment. There have been previous attempts to make a Gibb brothers' biopic, with Steven Spielberg and Richard Curtis both failing to make it happen. But now, according to

Robin's widow Edwina, "Our film is in the bag. We want to get the right writers. We are in discussions." It's expected to focus on the Bee Gees' rise from child stars of the 1950s through to their reign as disco kings of the 70s and Edwina has uncovered new music by the group. "My son is putting it all together," she announced.

"OUR FILM IS IN THE BAG. WE WANT TO GET THE RIGHT WRITERS. WE ARE IN DISCUSSIONS."

## LISTEN UP!

### 1 How Deep Is Your Love

The nation's favourite...

### 2 Stayin' Alive

Grit under the glitterball

### 3 Night Fever

Saturday night's alright for dancing

### 4 More Than A Woman

Paean to the fairer sex

### 5 Tragedy

Knocked out in an afternoon...

### 6 Too Much Heaven

...along with this one

### 7 You Should Be Dancing

We should all be dancing

### 8 Jive Talkin'

Influenced by US all-female harmony outfit Little Sister

### 9 You Win Again

Not to be confused with Hank Williams

### 10 How Can You Mend A Broken Heart

Almost as good as Al Green...

### 11 I've Gotta Get A Message To You

A final plea from Death Row

### 12 (The Lights Went Out In) Massachusetts

Because all the hippies were in San Francisco

### 13 Words

Written for manager Robert Stigwood, apparently

### 14 To Love Somebody

Recorded by Nina Simone, Janis Joplin, Rod Stewart...

### 15 New York Mining Disaster 1941

Power cut inspires lyric about a trapped miner

### 16 Nights On Broadway

Screaming falsetto – in tune

### 17 Love You Inside Out

Ninth and final US chart-topper

### 18 For Whom The Bell Tolls

Biggest UK hit of the 90s


### 19 The Woman In You

One of five contributions to *Saturday Night Fever* sequel

### 20 Fanny (Be Tender With My Love)

Quincy Jones called it one of his favourite R&B tracks ever



A full-page photograph of Paul Heaton dressed in an elaborate military uniform. He is seated on an ornate, gilded throne with a lion's head on the backrest. He wears a dark blue jacket with gold buttons and epaulettes, a white shirt, a red cravat, and a tall black hat with a red plume. He holds a sword in his right hand. The background is dark with a red curtain and a window with a lattice pattern.

"PEOPLE HAVE BEEN  
LET DOWN SO BADLY  
BY FIGURES IN POP  
AUTHORITY, I'M EASILY  
ABLE TO CLAIM  
THE CROWN"

PAUL HEATON





# REIGNING IN MANCHESTER

THERE'S POP ROYALTY, AND THEN THERE'S PAUL HEATON. HE MIGHT NOT HAVE SOLD AS MANY RECORDS AS MICHAEL JACKSON BUT, AS HIS FIRST COMPILATION SHOWCASING EVERYTHING FROM THE HOUSEMARTINS ONWARDS DEMONSTRATES, HEATON IS THE **LAST** KING OF POP. HE SETS OUT HIS RULES FOR MUSICAL MONARCHY...

JOHN EARLS

**O**n the train to Stockport to meet Paul Heaton, a text arrives. "Hiya. It's Paul Eaton. Ouse Martins? Five Get Over Exciting? Your car will be waiting at the rear of the station, and your drivers are Barry and Linda."

Now 56, Heaton only passed his driving test over the summer. Full of hugs and with a natural interest for anyone he meets that's fed itself into his lyrics for decades, Heaton is excited to greet *Classic Pop* – "It's the first time I've picked anyone up from the station!" – and admits he gets over his new-driver nerves by chatting constantly. During the short drive to his semi-detached home, Heaton confesses that his initial plan to treat driving as an opportunity to listen to more new music has already slipped away because, "I just listen to Radio 2, the same as anyone."

Although Heaton's house has been mentioned in profiles before, nothing can prepare you for its sensory overload. It's magnificent. A black and white photo of local record shop Kingbee is in the hall, next

to a framed display of football badges. The kitchen-diner where our interview takes place has football scarves around the walls, a test pressing of the most recent Paul Heaton & Jacqui Abbott album, *Crooked Calypso*, on the floor, plus the ephemera of Heaton's two teenage daughters: a *Doctor Who* magazine cutting, Chewits, a Halloween pumpkin... Paul Heaton's house is certainly full but in every respect, Paul Heaton has a very full life.

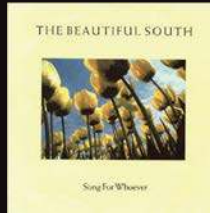
He's only half-joking in calling his new compilation *The Last King Of Pop*. Collating 22 singles from The Housemartins, The Beautiful South and Heaton & Abbott, plus sparkling new song 7" *Singles*, its title is a pointer that this most principled of pop stars feels troubled by pretenders to the throne. "People have been let down so badly by figures in pop authority, I'm easily able to claim the crown," Heaton attests. His home is one of the key reasons for his monarchy: "I live like a king *should* live." Gesturing to his modest garden, he insists, "This should be monarchy: ➤



Paul and The Beautiful South's Dave Hemingway take a dip



## A LITTLE TIME TO THINK THINGS OVER



Paul Heaton usually sorts his albums' running order into "2-1, 2-1" – two fast songs followed by one slowie, then another two fast songs. He naturally writes more fast songs anyway – "My lyrics often need to be spat out in whole lines" – but he explains that the arrangements frequently change

while songs are developed in the studio.

*I Gotta Praise*, the Heaton & Abbott song that opens *The Last King Of Pop*, began as a bluesy lament before Heaton thought it should sound more like Ray Charles' *Busted*. "It was more common in The Beautiful South that a song would start fast and end up slow," he laughs. "That's because the band weren't as complete as players as the one I'm with now. If they couldn't quite play it right, we'd slow it down, give it a piano intro and then the drums would come in. That happened from *Song For Whoever* on. It's when the pace keeps changing back and forth that it's probably not going to work at all."

Honing a song's arrangement is one of the key pieces of advice Heaton would give to new bands. "I sometimes hear bands where I think, 'That's a nice song, but they haven't arranged it at all.' They haven't put any thought into how a song should sound once they've written it. I'm not slagging them off for it, but I'm obsessed about getting a song right. You have to put some thought into it. I don't play an instrument, so I've got the sound of a song in my head."

an ordinary person enjoying life." Heaton's family moved to Surrey when he was a teenager but otherwise, he's never lived away from the north, saying, "A king should remain in his kingdom." Morrissey is thus instantly disqualified. "A good pop singer and writer, but he's gone out of the country. And when he comes back, he slags Britain off for being neighbourly. You couldn't fucking write him, could you?"

Other regal-disqualifying traits? Tax evasion. Being too rock: "Not that dirty grebo shit Paul Weller comes out with. He's supposed to be Mod, the dirty little bastard! I'm a pop singer." Doing adverts: "I'm disappointed when songs that mean a lot to me by good lads like Elvis Costello and Buzzcocks are used in adverts. People have bought *Rotterdam* or *I Gotta Praise* on the condition it was made for *them*. I can't then sell it to some dodgy bloke round the corner working for Toyota."

What else? Well, trying too hard to look cool: "I keep a list in my diaries of people who chuck in fake news about themselves. They see T-shirts of Bob Marley and Jim Morrison do well and want those sales, but they don't want to actually be dead. They go, 'How can I make up a story that makes me look dangerous?' and someone tells them 'You could say you've taken an overdose.' That's when you get that Dave Gahan bollocks – 'Yes mate, of course you died.'"

A mention of Johnny Marr, whose studio is near Heaton's house, does force

him to concede some ground. "Yeah, Johnny's very grounded," he says. "But I qualify to be king by several measurements. Admittedly, they're all my own measurements, but kings do that, too. I'm sure *Classic Pop* will get many angry emails claiming so-and-so is the last king of pop. But it's my rules and I won't fail to throw your readers into the sea if they ever question the king."

### SINGER TURNED SONGWRITER

It's this freewheeling levity that has stopped critics – if not the public, time and again – from realising just what a golden talent Paul Heaton has been ever since The Housemartins' *Flag Day* was first played by John Peel in 1985. Despite his playfulness around its title, Heaton hopes the compilation will make people appreciate the quality of his songwriting. "I can't take myself seriously for longer than a couple of minutes," he smiles. "It's a fault of mine, because I should be more serious, a bit. Lauren Laverne interviewed Paul Weller

on 6 Music recently, and it was perfect, because he is able to talk seriously about his music. If it was me, it'd just break down into fart jokes."

It's not that Heaton isn't able to analyse his songwriting in







He's never too rock, never lets his songs be used in adverts and (presumably) pays all his taxes, too

"LAUREN LAVERNE INTERVIEWED PAUL WELLER ON 6 MUSIC RECENTLY, AND IT WAS PERFECT, BECAUSE HE IS ABLE TO TALK SERIOUSLY ABOUT HIS MUSIC. IF IT WAS ME, IT'D JUST BREAK DOWN INTO FART JOKES."

PAUL HEATON

Paul with current collaborator Jacqui Abbott – a fourth album from the duo is due out in 2019



© Alex Lake

detail – he's passionate about the importance of music in people's lives. But he also grew up loving Spike Milligan and longtime *Beano* cartoonist Leo Baxendale, so absurdity is Heaton's default setting. At the start of his career, he says he was a singer who wrote songs... now it's the other way round.

"There was a specific vocal gymnastics early in my career, on songs like *Let Love Speak Up Itself*," he assesses. "As I've aged, I feel less capable of expressing myself in that department. It's one reason my lyrics have got better in the last 10 years, as I'm dealing with the darker side of my voice. I shouldn't really be playing arenas anymore. I've maybe got another four years of that in me, but once I get to 60, can I still cut that? I don't want to be a singer who people see and come away disappointed."

#### SMALLER ALBUMS, TOURING ON A BIKE

Such candour aside, Heaton is delighted that reuniting with former *Beautiful South* co-vocalist Jacqui Abbott has led to three Top Five albums. *The Last King Of Pop* features seven of their songs, compared to just one – the celebratory *Manchester* – from the final three *Beautiful South* albums, and none from either of Heaton's two solo albums. He admits he "withdrew into myself" in his solo career, making "smaller" albums because their impact had lessened.

"When I left *The Beautiful South*, I didn't realise that my name doesn't really mean anything," he concedes. "People around me were saying 'You've had all these hits, you've had 20 years at the top. How can they

not play your new song?' I was more philosophical about all that.

And when I was in my shell, I did some good things." He cites his musical *The 8th* and twice touring round Britain by bicycle, playing at pub venues – Heaton would love to formally establish the pubs which invited him to play as a nationwide circuit for up-and-coming musicians to learn their live craft.

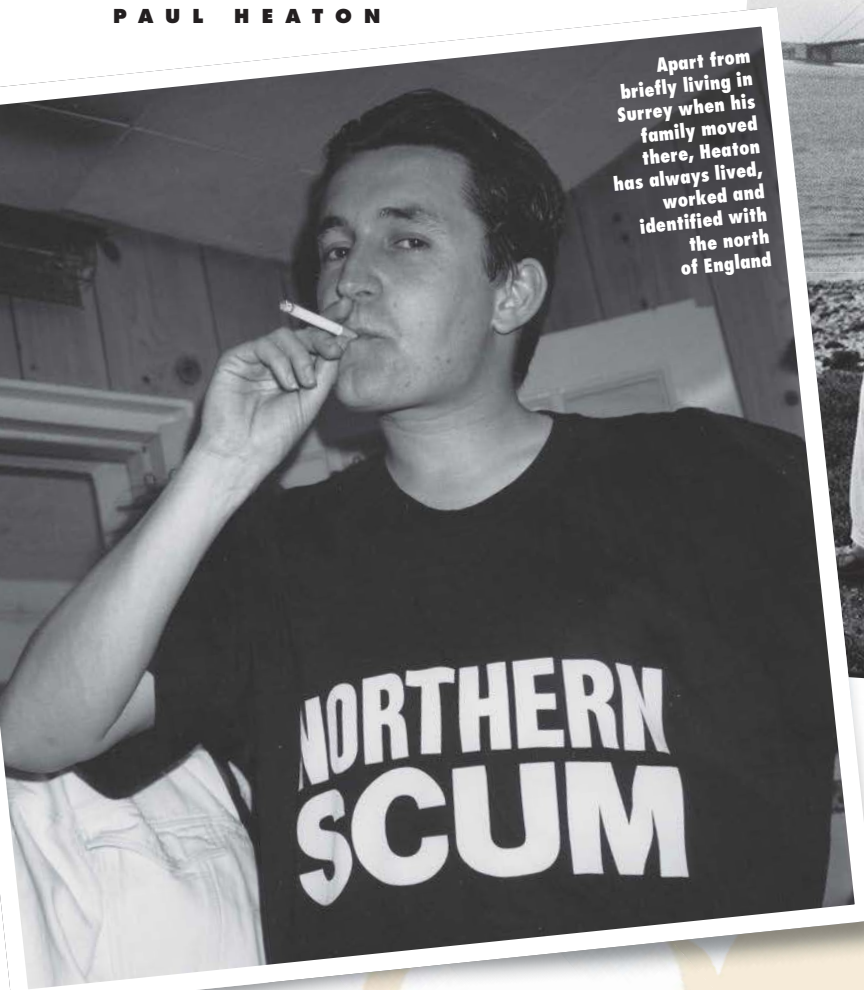
Although Jacqui Abbott was part of the cast of *The 8th*, it was Heaton's manager Simon Moran – also manager of *The Stone Roses* and *The Courteeners* – who persuaded Heaton to make records with his ex-colleague again. "I've never been into career growth," he laughs. "I didn't think *The Housemartins*' second record had to be bigger than the first. When *The Beautiful South* were doing well, I wasn't going, 'Right, now we've got to make it in America!' I was happy being an ordinary person on a wage. A great music wage, admittedly. Simon had a different outlook, pushing me to be less conservative. He said to get Jacqui back on board, get a proper producer, a proper studio."

Having stayed busy in his commercial wilderness years, it also helps that Heaton has sorted his personal life out. He admits he drank and smoked too much in *The Beautiful South*, saying, "When I played arenas first time round, I thought, 'This doesn't feel like me.' What's happened with Jacqui, I think it's been achieved and worked for a bit more."

Heaton is married for the first time, too. Off work from her job as a teaching assistant on the day of our







Apart from briefly living in Surrey when his family moved there, Heaton has always lived, worked and identified with the north of England



The Housemartins emerged in the late 80s to deliver three Top 10 LPs and six Top 20 singles in the UK

"I DON'T THINK 'GOD, I NEED A DRINK!' BECAUSE INSTEAD I THINK, 'I'M GOING AWAY WITH MY WIFE SOON AND I CAN DRINK THEN.'"

PAUL HEATON

interview, Linda is as warm and friendly as her husband, laughing with and at him before leaving him to talk shop. "Being married is brilliant," beams Heaton.

Linda has also helped Heaton come to terms with his drinking in a way the singer admits, "I'm incredibly lucky works for me." He only drinks when he needs to write songs, the couple going on "drinking holidays" to Holland and Gran Canaria. "I'm not suggesting anyone else does it," cautions Heaton. "I tried all the other systems: walking to the pub slower, only going to the pub on Monday. I tried going to the pub for three or four hours not drinking, and I couldn't do it. What I do is practical for me. If I'm cycling past a boozer in the summer, I don't think, 'God, I need a drink!' because instead I'll think, 'I'm going away with my wife in three months and I can drink then.' It keeps drinking fresh, and I think it's a system that will work for the rest of my songwriting career." Two to six pints is Heaton's window of opportunity for writing. "After that, lyrically I do as any drunk person does and start repeating myself."

One of the few dark clouds in Heaton's life is his relationship with the rest of The Beautiful South. Although their split in 2007 was amicable, it soured a year later when singers Dave Hemingway and Alison Wheeler and drummer Dave Stead formed The New Beautiful South, now called The South after "a pleasant meeting"

with Stead to ask him to at least change the band's name. Hemingway has since left.

"I'm fine with the others who aren't in The South," he shrugs. "The ones that are? It'd be nice to sit down and chat again, to have some level of friendship, even if it's at a distance. But there is that thing between us they've done that's clearly wrong. It's sad, but they're still alright kids, really. C\*\*\*ish behaviour doesn't make me think they're c\*\*\*s."

## REUNION? PROBABLY NOT

Conversely, the four members of The Housemartins are good mates 30 years after they split while still at the top, joking in their farewell statement that they, "weren't good enough in a time of Rick Astley and Shakin' Stevens." Heaton, Norman Cook (who produced Beautiful South classic *Perfect 10*), guitarist Stan Cullimore and drummer Hugh Whitaker meet annually to reminisce. Cullimore, now a children's author, "would be on that stage in 30 seconds" if a reunion was ever announced, although Heaton remains adamant that'll never happen.

"The Housemartins' music was sugary, sweet, indie and it was young. It would have looked sad any time after that decade to have reformed. It's one of the advantages of being self-deprecating, that I see myself as Pudding Billy – this big, fat version of how I used to be. It'd be like people asking, 'How come you don't wear that cardigan anymore?' I just gesture at myself and go, 'Why the fuck do you think?' Doing The Housemartins now just wouldn't look right. I understand why Stan would do it. His approach is good and simple – it was good fun, so why not? That's why we were a good band because it was Stan's positivity mixed with my very occasional negativity."

Heaton is first to admit

he was lucky The Housemartins arrived when they did, at a time when, "Once you got played by John Peel, there was a 50% chance at Radio 1 that, unless your records were totally mad, then

PAUL HEATON + JACQUI ABBOTT  
CROOKED CALYPSO





# WHAT ARE WE BECOMING?

The latter years of The Beautiful South are neglected on *The Last King Of Pop* because Paul Heaton believes they became too musically conservative. It's a mistake he doesn't want to repeat in his partnership with Jacqui Abbott. Out next year, their fourth album might be a double and Heaton wants to make it in Manchester, with local producers joined by ones who would come to the city for the project. Manchester electronic producer Dub Phizix is on Heaton's wishlist.

"I don't want it to just be one producer," Heaton explains. "I'd like to get a few and make it at our rehearsal rooms. I want to change how our songs are written and developed, too. I've always previously had a set of songs I'd already written and then I'd arrange them with the band. This time, I'd like to give them the songs and then say 'Right, do what you want with these.' I'll maybe write the lyrics after the music, which I've never done before, apart from the odd B-side."

It's a bold move for a singer only recently back on top commercially, but Heaton defers to the view of his co-writer Jonny Lexus. "Jonny believes that, so long as you've got two or three singles on the album, you can do what you want on the rest of it and it'll sell anyway. So we might write a couple of songs like that, just in case."

The next Heaton & Abbott album is likely to be sonically broader, too. "From the age of 16, I bought – well, nicked – a ton of ska and bluebeat. We're not going to make an experimental record, but I want to look back at the songs that shaped me. It's very rare I've made a record influenced by the music I listen to."

Jacqui Abbott sang on the fourth to the seventh Beautiful South albums before reuniting with Heaton in 2011 to work on his musical *The 8th*

The Beautiful South formed in 1988 and stayed together, in various incarnations, until 2007, selling around 15 million records along the way



Janice Long might play you, too. And if she did, then Bruno Brookes probably would. There was a framework for getting success. There are probably just as many great young bands out there now as ever, they just don't have the chances we did." As king, he's therefore forgiving of new acts that allow their songs on adverts.

Heaton is also pleased that his children don't especially share his musical tastes – his eldest daughter is into drum 'n' bass and grime, his middle daughter prefers "really dark hip-hop". Apart from his in-car Radio 2 addiction, Heaton only listens to new music. For decades, he's kept monthly Top 20 charts of his

favourite new songs in notebooks. He shows me his latest, a range of reggae,

folk, hip-hop, R&B and pop as

entertainingly freewheeling as

the contents of his kitchen. At

the end of our interview, he

offers up a banana and an

apple for the journey home.

A passing Linda points out,

"There's all this fruit. You'll

notice none of it is in the

fruit bowl." She's right –

it's too full of stuff. But

that's how a king should

be: entertained by all of

life's diversions, living

among his people. Paul

Heaton deserves

his crown. ■



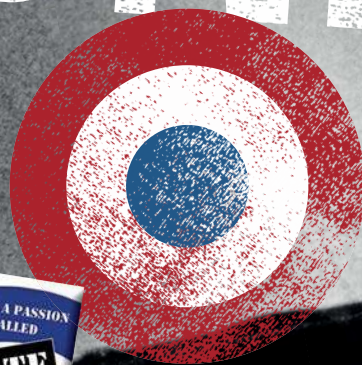


THE  
JAM

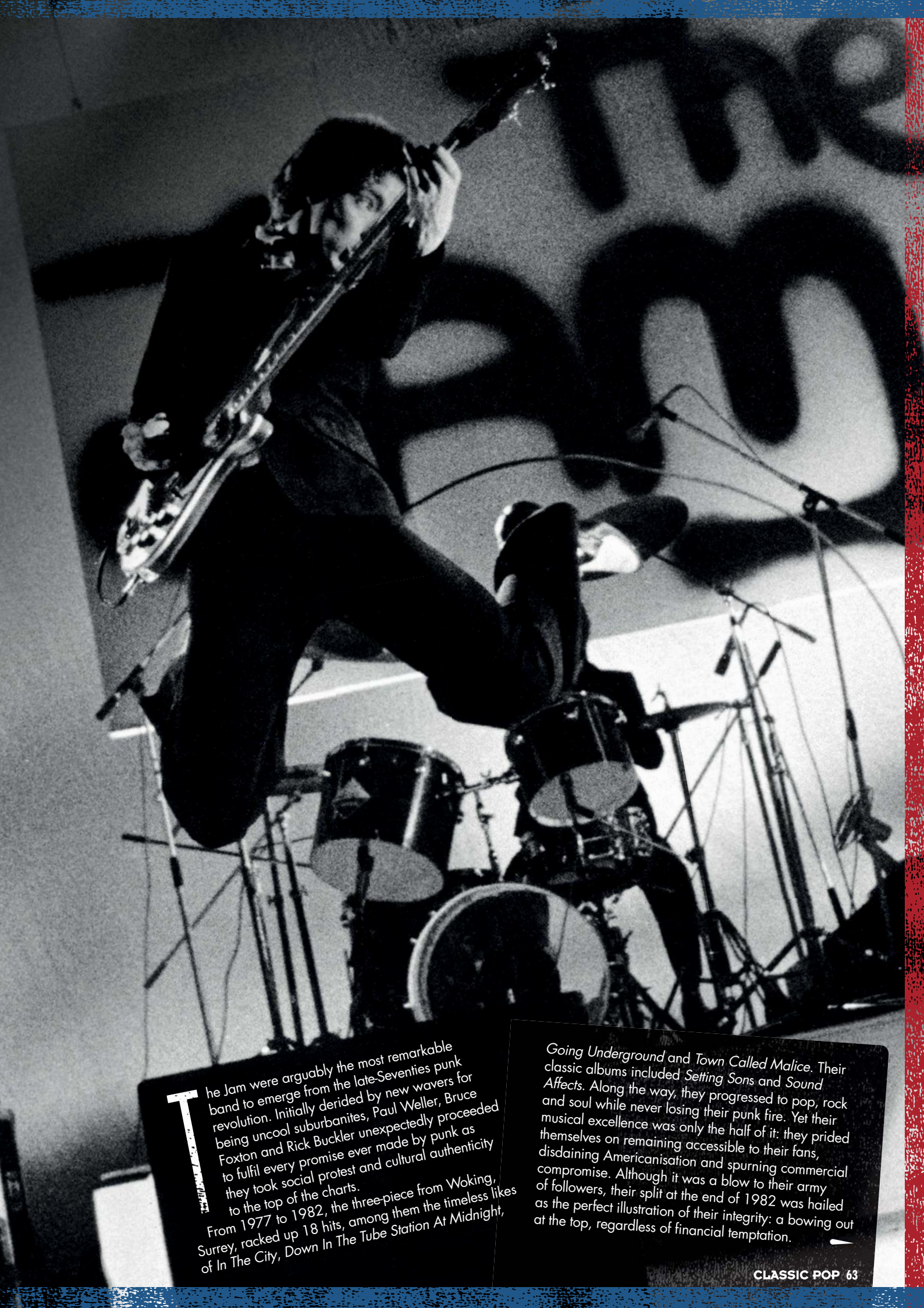
# TO BE SOMEONE

AFTER DROPPING THE BALL WITH THEIR UNDERCOOKED SECOND ALBUM, THE JAM WERE IN CRISIS. COULD PAUL WELLER MAKE GOOD ON HIS AMBITION TO BE A LEADER OF HIS GENERATION? IN THIS EXTRACT FROM HIS BOOK, LOVE WITH A PASSION CALLED HATE: THE INSIDE STORY OF THE JAM, **SEAN EGAN** TRACES THE MOMENT THE MOD TRIO WERE FORCED TO DIG DEEP TO SAVE THEIR CAREERS.

© Ian Dickson/Redferns







**T**he Jam were arguably the most remarkable band to emerge from the late-Seventies punk revolution. Initially derided by new wavers for being uncool suburbanites, Paul Weller, Bruce Foxton and Rick Buckler unexpectedly proceeded to fulfil every promise ever made by punk as they took social protest and cultural authenticity to the top of the charts. From 1977 to 1982, the three-piece from Woking, Surrey, racked up 18 hits, among them the timeless likes of *In The City*, *Down In The Tube Station At Midnight*,

*Going Underground* and *Town Called Malice*. Their classic albums included *Setting Sons* and *Sound Affects*. Along the way, they progressed to pop, rock and soul while never losing their punk fire. Yet their musical excellence was only the half of it: they prided themselves on remaining accessible to their fans, disdaining Americanisation and spurning commercial compromise. Although it was a blow to their army of followers, their split at the end of 1982 was hailed as the perfect illustration of their integrity: a bowing out at the top, regardless of financial temptation.



Their story, though, was more complicated than how it appeared from the outside. The group's vaunted values were sometimes contrasted by private recrimination and duplicity. Meanwhile, their musical achievements did not constitute a seamless trajectory, but were marked by more than one upheaval that left them doubting their future.

Sean Egan has spoken to a raft of insiders to provide the definitive Jam biography, *Love With A Passion Called Hate: The Inside Story Of The Jam* (Askill Publishing). Via access to recording producers, music label staff and all three members of The Jam, he has uncovered the full truth about a remarkable band.

This extract finds The Jam at possibly the lowest ebb of their career. Their May 1977 debut album, *In The City*, was critically acclaimed, but their second album *This Is The Modern World* – released just six months later – was widely derided, sending chief songwriter Paul Weller into a creative tailspin and their record label boss Chris Parry into a rage. To the latter – who had signed The Jam to Polydor and co-produced their records with Vic Coppersmith-Heaven – it all seemed a dismayingly long way from when Weller had asserted to him at a West End pub just 18 months previously, “I am going to be a leader of my generation.”

**W**eller seems to have been shaken by the reception accorded *This Is The Modern World*. The panning of his latest batch of songs – the very adventurism of which implied that he was convinced his craft was evolving – must surely have played a part in his productivity proceeding to drop off a cliff. The joy he took in his romantic relationship must have made for quite a remarkable juxtaposition, and one which in turn created the temptation to use his relationship to retreat from the brickbats and hide from his creative responsibilities.

Weller's shaken state of mind seems to have made him susceptible to the notion that The Jam as it was currently constituted was not a viable proposition.

## “I AM GOING TO BE A LEADER OF MY GENERATION”

*Paul Weller*

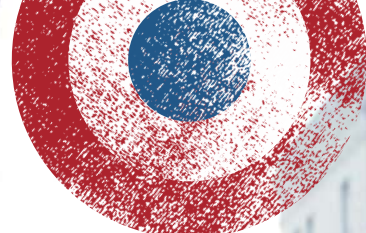
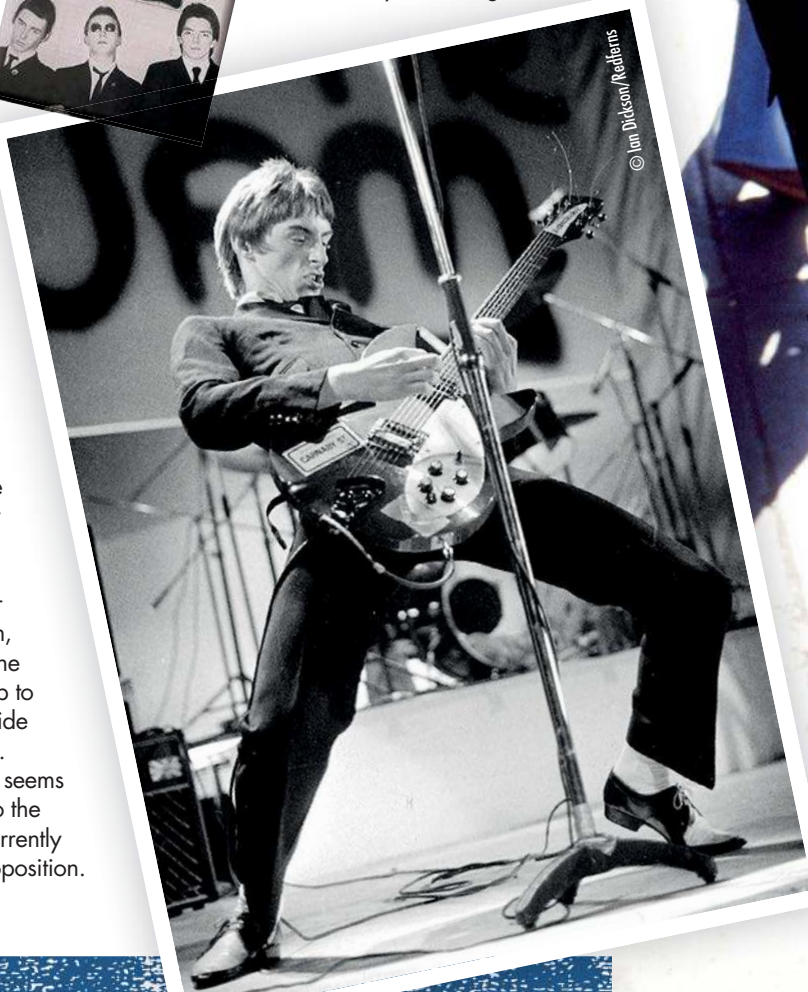
Near the end of 1977, Weller asked Glen Matlock if he wanted to join The Jam as rhythm guitarist. Matlock had ceased being musical foil to lyricist Johnny Rotten when

he left the Sex Pistols in February '77, but – as Weller knew – had formed a new band, Rich Kids. He was also a bassist. Nonetheless, he was interested. Matlock told John Reed that the overture only foundered when he bumped into Buckler and Foxton at punk venue The Roxy and laughed at their

insistence that his joining would necessitate him wearing a mod suit. (Ironically, The Jam had dispensed with the suits by year's end.) After that, Matlock turned the tables and asked Weller if he would join Rich Kids as frontman. He found Weller briefly receptive. One wonders whether the attraction for Weller of working with Matlock – in whichever group – was that the burden of songwriting would no longer be solely on his shoulders.

When – in lieu of new songs from Weller – Foxton stepped up to the breach to enable The Jam to release a disc on 3 March 1978, he provided *News Of The World* and B-side track *Innocent Man*. The A-side is yet another song in which

Foxton is to be found getting aerated about something that might well be objectionable but is hardly a burning



The Jam pictured on the streets of San Francisco, 1977



issue. If one were to be generous, one could suggest that – as with *London Traffic* – Foxton has been vindicated by events. However, the bassist is not here condemning anything so extreme as the titular British tabloid newspaper's hacking of a murdered teenager's mobile phone (something that would in 2011 lead to its abrupt demise), but instead common-or-garden salaciousness and intrusiveness. The tune is ordinary, certainly not boasting the best attributes of either punk rock or power pop, which genres are shoutingly invoked at the beginning. The co-opting of the street newspaper vendor's historical sales pitch 'read all about it!' is simply too banal to constitute an acceptable chorus, not least because the banality is squared by it being unimaginatively bolted to the title of the newspaper in question. Additionally, as is ever the case with his lead vocals, Foxton's delivery is slightly gormless.

That the acoustic guitar riff strummed by Weller in *Innocent Man* is reminiscent of The Who's *Baba O'Riley* is somewhat unfortunate in light of the fact that the lick of *The Modern World* owed something to the same band's *Pictures Of Lily*. However, that's only the start of the problems with a track that – as with *News Of The World* and, come to that, all Foxton's previous compositions – gives the impression of toytown protest and manufactured fury. The subject of the song is not Emmett Till, Angela Davis, Hurricane Carter, Liddle Towers, George Davis or any of the other real-life *cause célèbres* taken up by other rock songwriters. Groan-inducingly, Foxton is simply positing a theoretical victim of judicial injustice. The syncopated chorus might have an emotional power were he talking about an actual case, but probably wouldn't. Foxton invokes the hangman's noose in a country where capital punishment had been outlawed more than a decade previously, and in any case undermines his opposition to it by trilling the contradictory sentiment, "instead of him, it should be you."

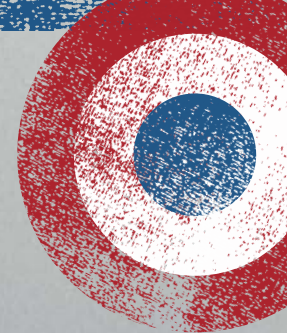
Piano provided by Weller bobs just audibly beneath the surface of *Innocent Man*. Weller's only other significant contribution to this single-cum-EP is the composition of B-side cut *Aunties And Uncles (Impulsive Youths)*. It's immediately likeable in embracing the idea that rock/punk doesn't have to be all about myth-making and rebel stances, but can encompass domestic notes and everyday trivia. Yet, however charming Weller's bemused cataloguing of family meddling, the track is lyrically and melodically negligible.

The single's sleeve – designed jointly by Bill Smith and Weller – showed The Jam striding down Carnaby Street. Smith concedes that the idea had nothing to do with the contents of the record.

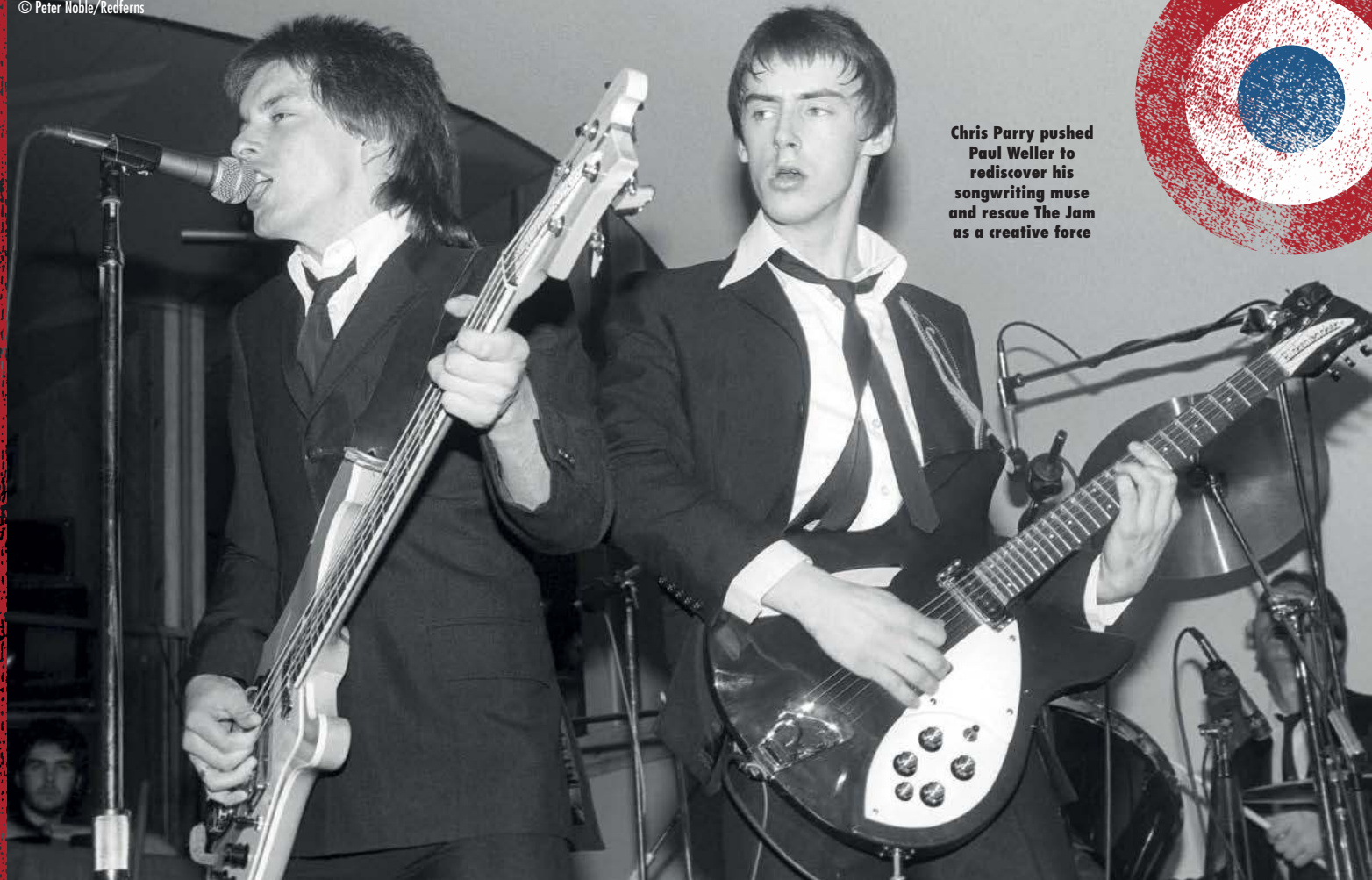
© Chris Walter/WireImage







**Chris Parry pushed Paul Weller to rediscover his songwriting muse and rescue The Jam as a creative force**



He also admits that the record was hardly vintage Jam. "It would be lovely to only work on music you liked," he reflects, adding, "to be honest, I think they were putting out far too much, but I think Polydor were at that time worried that they hadn't signed the right band. They were going to be dropped or who knows what might have happened." He says that Polydor "definitely" wanted to get out product before the punk bubble burst: "They thought it was going to run out of steam."

That the single climbed to No.27 technically represented a commercial bounce, but The Jam were clearly treading water.

In spring 1978, Chris Parry organised some Jam studio time intended to provide an idea of what the band currently had to offer pending future formal recording sessions. What it revealed was that the band's creative drought had developed to a potentially terminal state. Weller later told Phil Sutcliffe: "We'd done about eight tunes, Bruce's and three or four of mine, and they were all piss poor."

Foxton recalls the period as involving "pressure." He says: "For whatever reason, *Modern World* didn't sell that well and it's like the make-or-break record then. If this doesn't go, we'll be out of a job, basically. We certainly won't have a record company." That pressure can't have been helped by the unproductiveness of

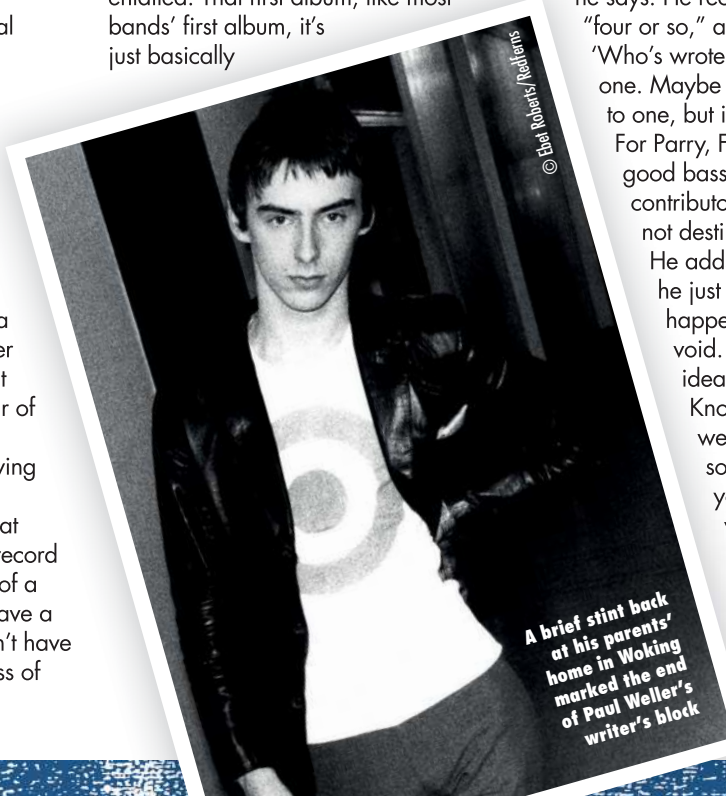
Weller. "Bruce wrote more songs around that time for the so-called aborted third album because I wasn't writing," says Weller. "I didn't have the interest in it, so he stepped in to try to save the day. I don't know if it was a writer's block. I just couldn't be fucked. I'd lost interest in it, and it took a while for it to come back." Weller remembers this period as one of confusion. "As long as I can remember, I just dreamt of being in a band, making records, blah blah blah. But I don't think I realised what it entailed. That first album, like most bands' first album, it's just basically

your live set, what you've been cooking up for two years or whatever, and then all of a sudden you've done them tunes and now you've got to write another 12 or 14. It was a bit like, 'I didn't realise it entailed this.' So it took me a while to get serious about it and realise this entails a bit more thought and a bit more work."

Parry, who was absent from the sessions, was as unimpressed as Weller by what he heard. "They were just demos that were being put forward and they were rubbish," he says. He recalls the songs numbering "four or so," and says, "I asked them, 'Who's wrote these?' Maybe Paul wrote one. Maybe his name was attached to one, but it was mainly Bruce."

For Parry, Foxton was "a very, very good bass player and a wonderful contributor to The Jam, but he was not destined to be the songwriter." He adds: "To be fair to Bruce, he just wanted to make things happen. He just wanted to fill the void. Paul went AWOL... I've no idea why Paul didn't contribute. Knowing artists, I just think he went, 'Fuck you lot. You do something and prove what you're capable of. I'm bored with pushing this boat.'"

Parry now had a task on his hands. "My job was simply to get The Jam back on song. Paul was standing off. Bruce was



**A brief stint back at his parents' home in Woking marked the end of Paul Weller's writer's block**

© Phil Roberts/Redferns



pushing forward with songs, and even Rick Buckler was. It wasn't believable. All of a sudden, within the corporation, The Jam were starting to be, 'well that's okay, we've had a bit of success with them – next.' I hated that. All I wanted to do was help the band make something along the lines of when Paul said what he said to me at that pub. I just wanted to make something happen. It wasn't about me. I'd figured out I didn't want to get involved with the management of The Jam. I realised that they were quirky English geezers that didn't really want to travel. I was a New Zealander, I've travelled a long way, I've had a big journey in my life and I wanted to journey on. So they weren't part of what I wanted to do. But I didn't want to leave them in the lurch. And I understood how these record companies were operating. They were terrible. They could sit round the table and say, 'This is over' and The Jam were closed down. I wasn't prepared to let that happen. I knew there was no future with The Jam unless Paul stood up and my last stand for them was that nothing – was going to come into Polydor until Paul stood up. I knew I was going to leave Polydor. I knew where I was going to go, but that was my gift back to The Jam, and if The Jam didn't respond, then fuck 'em."

A crisis meeting took place at which Parry admits his words were "quite brutal actually." He recalls those words as, "There's no way we're going to make a record where we've got no Paul Weller songs and you, Bruce, are going to be writing the material. These songs are shit." He adds: "I just put my foot down. I put a lot of effort and a lot of time into The Jam and I just wanted them to be great. At this point, I've got enough power to say, 'No, you're not coming into the studio.' That third Jam album was not going to be fucked up. They were either going to make a good-to-great album or they're not going to make an album at all. And nobody was going to fuck with me on that. Not Paul, not John, not his fucking lawyer, not Bruce, not Rick, and nobody in my company was going to stop me making that decision. The first time in my life I was a creative gatekeeper, and I loved it." The Jam camp loved it slightly less. "They hated me," Parry recalls of the reaction to his verdict. "Bruce was as angry as fuck. John wasn't very happy, either."

Foxton says Parry's words were "hard to take, particularly when you're young and you just think, 'What the fuck do you know?'" Although the exchange was a bombshell, the bassist admits it did the band good in the long run, to say the least. "It really – mainly Paul – made us go away and think, 'Well, okay, got to try harder.' It's a bit like your school report: 'Could do better'. That was the kick up the arse we all needed. It was our saviour really." [Producer Vic] Coppersmith-Heaven is of

the same mind. "It was a very constructive process by Chris to be critical of the songs, which in turn sent Paul back to the drawing board," he says. "He was a positive input for the band at that stage."

Foxton denies that the band were close to a split, but this is rather undermined by the fact that during this period, a music paper carried quotes from him which seemed to reveal that he was actively thinking of a life beyond The Jam and even outside music. "I don't know whether it's going to work out..." he admitted to a *Sounds* scribe, "...when The Jam fall through I ain't gonna join another band... I wouldn't want to go through all that hustling round the clubs again... I'd really like to open up a guesthouse or a small hotel. I've seen all these people open up one year with just four or five rooms, the next year it's seven or eight, then the next year they're having an extension built. You can't go wrong." Foxton now says, "That's desperation, isn't it? That's something that my mum and dad, bless them, were looking into for years. To get off the treadmill, really. We were looking at a place down in Bournemouth, I seem to recall, a little bed and breakfast. It was in the back of my mind: 'Oh sod it, if this ain't working I'll do that then.'" Leaving aside the astonishing lack of confidence Foxton was displaying in what continued to be – whatever the group's recent failings – a viable, charting act, the conventionalism and careerism of his vague future plans were easy prey for those who had always considered The Jam unspeakably square.

Like Foxton, Buckler is able to recognise a process of improved focus and industry about the album that became *All Mod Cons*. "We were under a great deal of pressure to come up with something which was going to do a darn sight better than *Modern World* and we went through this thing of rearranging songs and rearranging them again," he recalls. "I think we all just pulled our socks up, rolled up our sleeves and got stuck in to doing this album the best we could. We

had no idea whether it would work or not. We just felt that we had to put a lot of effort into it, as opposed to being cavalier like we were for *Modern World*."

This process involved abandoning the demo sessions and granting Weller time to work his way out of his writer's block. During this period, Weller – persistently bothered at his Baker Street flat by what would now be termed a stalker – moved

back into his parents' home in Woking. Perhaps this return to the comforting familiarities of childhood is what led to the subsequent revival in his composing skills. Weller told journalist Dave Schulps: "I wrote the bulk of the songs in a couple of days..."

Parry says that The Jam came back to him with new songs within a month. "John said, 'Paul's writing again.' There may have been some more tapes, I'm not sure, but certainly sessions were booked at RAK in St John's Wood and we got cracking. I commissioned the third album to be started. I'm really proud of the fact that I actually closed the door on that and stopped the bullshit, because that was significant in the development of the band. It made the other players realise that Paul was the one that'll drive the

creative process." Weller now says: "I think it was good in some ways that *Modern World* was a flop because, if nothing else, it propelled me to start getting my shit together and get serious about it, which culminated in *All Mod Cons*, which was our first big hit, if you like."

Parry adds a curious postscript to this story. "It probably triggered the end of the band," he says of his pep-talk/ultimatum. "It was brutal, it needed to be brutal but, looking back, if it was less brutal maybe it gave room for people like Rick and Bruce to contribute a bit and Paul to relax a bit and maybe they could have been a longer-lived trio." ■

◉ **Love With A Passion Called Hate: The Inside Story Of The Jam** by Sean Egan is published by Askill Publishing



"WE ALL JUST  
PULLED OUR SOCKS  
UP, ROLLED UP OUR  
SLEEVES AND GOT  
STUCK IN TO DOING  
THIS ALBUM THE  
BEST WE COULD"

Rick Buckler



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# SHOOTING FROM THE LIP

AS ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN RETURN WITH REWORKED VERSIONS OF SOME OF THE MOST ICONIC MOMENTS FROM THEIR GLITTERING BACK CATALOGUE, IAN McCULLOCH, AKA MAC THE MOUTH, IS TAKING NO PRISONERS: "IF YOU'VE GOT A QUOTE, SAY IT. I'M A SARCASTIC BASTARD..."

DAVID BURKE

Country rocker Steve Earle once said he'd stand on Bob Dylan's coffee table and declare his mentor Townes Van Zandt the best songwriter that he'd ever heard. Well, I'd stand before David Bowie's Holy Ghost and declare Ian McCulloch the best singer ever birthed by this isle.

Bowie played characters; McCulloch is all character. His voice is soaked in the experience of a life well lived, a dance between grace and danger. His voice is honest, Scouse honest. Time spent in his company, even on a dodgy phonenumber, is never dull – a freewheeling symphony of sarcasm, mischief, truthfulness, sensitivity and savvy. When Mac The Mouth talks, he sounds like a wounded but wise man full of tales and trickery. And when he sings, he still sounds like the boy who should have been king.

McCulloch remains the quintessential rockstar poet. Listen to the vibrant re-imagining of his back pages on *The Stars*, *The Oceans* & *The Moon*, songs that

were peerless anyway, done again for the sake of being better. Which they are. *The Killing Moon*, the murkiest of ballads, cries out in a different note, a bluer note. Mac's miserabilist touchstones – Morrison, Cohen, Brel, Sinatra – are distilled in that singular, defining performance. It will be a difficult return to the original. The whole album is a reminder not of what Echo & The Bunnymen were, but of what Echo & The Bunnymen are.

McCulloch seems humbled by the generous reception already afforded *The Stars*, *The Oceans* & *The Moon*, as though he can't believe people continue to care. But why wouldn't we? "A lot of people have said 'congratulations'. It's weird. I knew that it could go either way, but it seems people are interested," he tells me, genuinely pleased. So why did he feel the need to revive a legacy? "I sometimes find a different coat after 40 years. I think the main thing was, if I get to hear one of the old versions, I always squirm. They're fantastic records, but I think the fact that





“  
I'M CERTAINLY  
NOT THE BEST  
SINGER, BUT I'VE  
GOT SOMETHING  
THAT NO ONE  
ELSE HAS GOT

I wanted to almost hear what's inside me throat. It's so exposed on this. I did one take on some of the songs.

"Some of them were just guides. It's not about updating the songs so they sound modern. It's like, that's how I feel now. I want every single person on earth to get to hear my voice, and they'll go: 'He's the best fucking voice on the planet.' I'm certainly not the best singer, but I've got something that no one else has got. It's like the opposite of Michael Bublé, or whatever. I haven't got started on certain aspects of what I can do.

"[I'm] wiser, I think. It's like, I know the songs. I did then, but I was too busy singing them and kind of pouting. With these it was just one take, because I kind of know how to inflect without it sounding like a posy thing. I kind of let my voice just drift.

"Frank Sinatra was the master of, not just interpretation, but of knowing exactly what his voice could do. Sometimes I have competitions. I'll write singers' names down, like a knockout tournament kind of thing. I'll do it with myself. So I'll have Neil Young, Bowie, Lou Reed, Jacques Brel, maybe, purely for the voice. Even though Bowie is my favourite voice, he also does the mockney kind of stuff... But it's Frank Sinatra versus Elvis Presley in the final, and myself. And depending on me mood, it's usually Frank. But then I'm like: 'Nah, Frank's taking the piss – he knows how good he is.' He makes it sound like he don't believe it, but then he's out with his massive knob shagging Ava Gardner with his hat on and his coat. But Elvis is doing the moves. I do Elvis when I've got me white kecks on. He was a brave man for wearing white kecks."

This sort of comic diversion is Mac being Mac, the Mac that you want him to be. The Mac that's always made great copy. Like the Mac who boasted that *Ocean Rain* was the greatest album ever made. It certainly might have been the greatest album of the 80s. Did he believe his boast? "No, I was talking to the head of the record company, Rob Dickins. He said to me: 'How's it going? What does it sound like?' I said, 'It's the greatest album ever made.' We only had a couple of backing tracks done. It was him who went: 'What a quote'. It was a tongue-in-cheek,

they were sung without experience... Songs like *The Killing Moon*, even with the band live, it means something different to me. It never had a specific meaning, but it's got me through my life, that song. I kind of feel I own that moon. Not Neil Armstrong's one. But I do own *that* one.

"When I heard the backing track early on, it was a different version where our keyboard player took these sounds, and I thought, 'I can sing from the moon, like I'm just standing there on my moon, singing to Earth or the universe or whatever.' Almost like I found my place. I knew these songs were going to sustain themselves and take me on a journey, and the band, but lyrically especially. Like *Seven Seas*, I feel like I'm a sailor who's singing a shanty psalm or something. He's done sailing. I don't want it to sound like an end-of-cycle thing – I've got more fire in my gut. Because of the way we've been playing in recent years, everyone plays it like it means something."

### WINNING CROON

He may be older now, but there's a beguiling innocence in his delivery, especially on *Nothing Lasts Forever* and *Rescue*. "The voice is perfect for these [new] versions. With this one,



**Above; 1984's *Ocean Rain*, the band's fourth studio album, contains their immortal track *The Killing Moon*. Their latest release, *The Stars, The Oceans & The Moon*, features new arrangements of classic recordings.**





© Getty Images

Above; Echo & The Bunnymen in 1984 (l to r): Les Pattinson, Ian McCulloch, Will Sergeant and Pete de Freitas

arrogant kind of thing. The album didn't go over the top. And it was strange – all those strange little songs. It was a Scouse thing, but I honestly believed it, if only for *The Killing Moon* being on there. I'd put it in my Top 10 albums. It's always Marvin Gaye or *Sgt. Pepper's*... Fuck that. I mean, Marvin Gaye was good. But *Sgt. Pepper's*... was shit in my opinion. It was embarrassing. Lennon was dressed like he was auditioning for a Spaghetti Western or something.

"I was on a roll anyway. I was good at it, and I could say quotes about anyone and nail them, even if I liked the fuckers. If you've got a quote, say it. I'm a sarcastic bastard. I'd say it to their faces and then we'd go out on the town. I have to admit that some U2 songs are great and they're done brilliantly. Like *One*, I wish I'd written that – and *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*, although he's taken about 10 hours to get to the end of the fucking song. It's like fucking older than the *Domesday Book* and it's probably going to last longer. But they were the direct competition

## DARK SIDE OF THE ALBUM COLLECTION

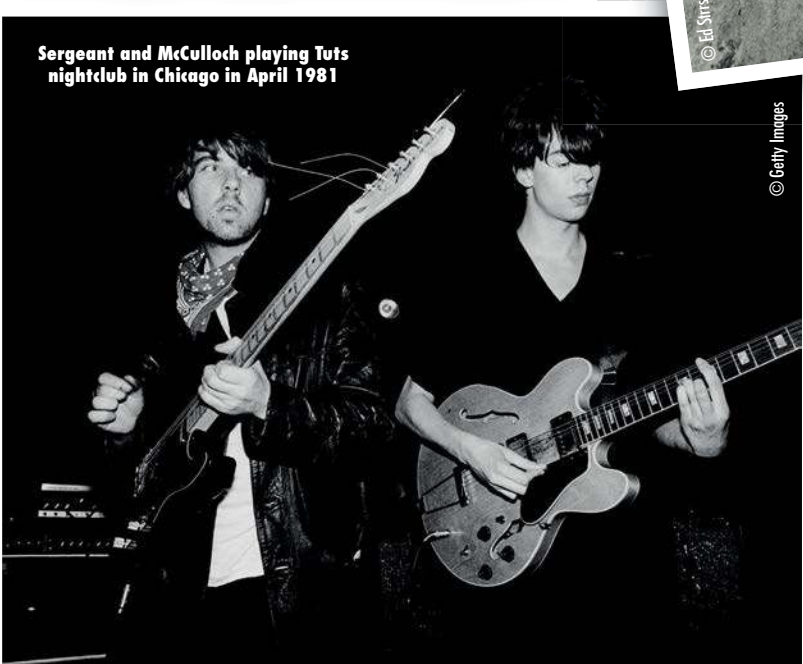
The Bunnymen came out of the scene in Liverpool with Julian Cope (pictured below), Pete Wylie, Frankie Goes To Hollywood and the bloke from A Flock Of Seagulls with the quirky hair. History has it that Mac started with Cope and Wylie as part of The Crucial Three. But Mac's having none of it.

"Can we put that to bed? Because it didn't exist. We did it for 10 minutes. Julian Cope had like a silver boiler suit on, not even like some punk, because he had those yellow-rimmed glasses on like Timmy Mallet. It was one of these: 'Well, why am I here?' They were like The Not-So-Crucial Two. The album that I refused to play – me sister bought it for me – was *The Dark Side Of The Moon* by Pink Floyd. And I said: 'I'm not even going to say thanks for this, Julie.' I was about 13 and I was: 'What the fuck?! Don't ever let someone see me with this album.' But Julian Cope, he's got a copy and he's obviously played it to death. He showed up with this boiler suit and bass, and plugs it into me mum's electric dryer or something, then he does the bassline to *Money*. I was like: 'What the fuck?!' And we're in the midst of The Fall – I've just seen The Fall and all that stuff, and he's coming out with the fucking bassline from Pink

Floyd and sounds like Joe Jackson. Fucking terrible. And Wylie's there with a screaming guitar – a Les Paul, heaviest guitar in the world... I was like: 'I'll you what, lad, I will form a band that is, you know, decent.'"



© Led Zin's



© Getty Images

Sergeant and McCulloch playing Tuts nightclub in Chicago in April 1981

– them and Simple Minds. But U2 knew how to go. That made me fucking hate them more. I used to think, 'He's a fucking bastard.' Bono was on the news one time, saving Africa, literally! I thought, 'There's no way I'd do that.' Adam Clayton's me favourite bass player."

They couldn't hold an Amnesty candle to Echo & The Bunnymen, though... "No, I know. Especially in Ireland, people hate them over there. It's always: 'Alright Mac? What about that Bono twat?' We were always getting associated with them. It was always them and us. I was like:



# PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED

Echo & the Bunnymen were "the full package", according to Nicky Wire of Manic Street Preachers. "They had amazing songs and lyrics that provoked and inspired; stunning wit and a look that was just perfection. There was no weak link, visually, no bad leather jackets or mullets," says the bass player.

He acknowledges The Bunnymen as a pivotal influence on the Manics – an influence that more was stylistic than musical. "We borrowed imagery from them so often, whether it was the scene in the video for *Seven Seas* where Mac rips the wig off and smudges his lipstick, which I directly ripped off in the original *You Love Us* video; the severity of the *Apocalypse Now*-look uniforms they wore around the *Shine So Hard* era for *The Holy Bible*; or just the bleakness of a Welsh beach for a photoshoot – Porthcawl for *Heaven Up Here*, Black Rock Sands for *This Is My Truth Tell Me Yours*."

"I don't want to do all that shite on stage, based on The Boss, Bruce Springsteen."

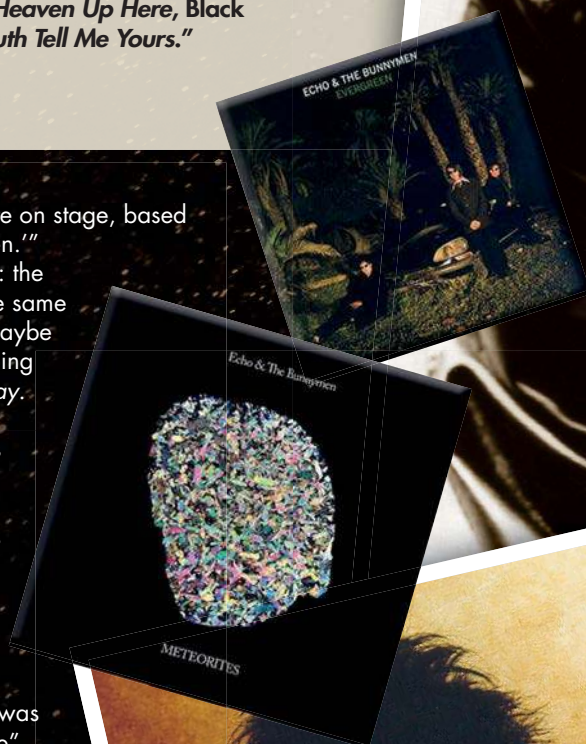
A *Top Of The Pops* memory: the Bunnymen and U2 sharing the same Thursday-night programme, maybe their earliest appearances, doing *The Cutter* and *New Year's Day*. "They were like, 'It's quiet on New Year's Day' – well, that's 'cause everyone's fucking puking up after the night before. *The Cutter* was Bono's favourite song. And they loved us."

## A BETTER BUNNYMAN

If Mac reckoned *Ocean Rain* was "the greatest album ever made", however far his tongue was in his cheek, you won't find him pronouncing so audaciously when it comes to *The Stars*, *The Oceans* & *The Moon*. In fact, quite the opposite. "I'm not doing this for anyone else. I'm doing it as it's important to me to make the songs better. I have to do it," he said in advance publicity for the release. An explanation is proffered: "We had a meeting with the record company. I just said I wanted the songs to sound better. What I loved about that meeting, one of the main women at BMG was jotting stuff down, and that was what they chose to kind of launch the album – that he doesn't care if no one likes it, or buys it apart from himself. The opposite to 'the greatest album ever made'."

The Bunnymen – McCulloch, guitarist Will Sergeant, bassist Les Pattinson and a drum

McCulloch and Sergeant remain the only original members in the current incarnation of the Bunnymen







machine – formed in 1978. Pete de Freitas joined as drummer soon after. And then came *Crocodiles*, a debut collection that had Rolling Stone's David Fricke going a bit gaga over Mac, whose "apocalyptic brooding" assimilated "Jim Morrison-style psychosexual yells, a flair for David Bowie-like vocal inflections and the nihilistic bark of his punk peers into a disturbing portrait of the singer as young-neurotic".

*Heaven Up Here* and *Porcupine* followed, before their magnum opus, *Ocean Rain*. By 1987, he had quit the band, replaced by ex-St Vitus Dance frontman, Noel Burke. But it was really Sergeant and de Freitas who were to blame. At least that was the story then. But now, McCulloch insists he didn't leave.

"I convened a meeting in a bar – they didn't go to pubs – in Christmas of '87. I said: 'We need to jack this in.' In hindsight, I needed to just not be with them, the poisonous atmosphere created by the girlfriends and wives, really."

He admits that episode continues to bug him and that he "doesn't like thinking about it". So, how did Mac feel when the Bunnymen carried on without him? "Oh, it was a total stab in the back. Will phoned me up and said: 'We want to carry on.' I phoned him back and said: 'You are the biggest c\*\*t I've ever known and ever will know.'"

“

EVERY NIGHT  
YOU GO TO BED  
A DIFFERENT PERSON  
IF YOU'RE NOT  
SINGING IN  
A BAND

It felt like I was cuckolded or something. It still feels like that. It was like suicide.

"They were like: 'We'll keep the name,' and then they got some fella with the weirdest head. Freddy Krueger's head would have been better than that! Or fucking Ann Jones – remember her, the tennis player? I didn't speak to Will for about four years."

Tragically, de Freitas died in a motorcycle accident in 1989. Fast-forward to 1997 and the crucial three (see what we did there?) – McCulloch, Sergeant and Pattinson – reunited. It was something McCulloch had thought about often during his decade of exile. "Every night you go to bed a different person if you're not singing in a band," he says, the sense of abandonment still audible.

Now Echo & The Bunnymen are back in the game proper, after inking a deal with BMG earlier this year, and ready for another tilt at global domination... Not that they were impelled by such ambition the first time around. "I was looking at some old photos from the Peel Sessions and stuff, and I was like, 'How the fuck didn't we not only be the biggest band in the world, but the richest? How come we're not married to Miss World?!' But we did alright. It was just we didn't want it, particularly. It was more fun taking the piss. I always thought I'd be, not famous, just important somewhere down the line as a singer."

Well, McCulloch got that right, at least. He is important. Very important. Perhaps Mac should get out more – "I'm just a hermit now. It's great. I can piss in a milk bottle if needs be" – and he might realise how much love there is for him. A winter tour that began at the Olympia Theatre in Dublin on 12 October, winding up at the Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles on 4 December, will affirm this affection.

Then it's a return to the studio in 2019 for a new Echo & The Bunnymen album, their first set of original material since 2014's *Meteorites*. "It's very rhythm-guitar-led and there's a lot of class Talking Heads stuff going on. It's a combination of lots of things. A bit more – I don't want to say 'funky', but there are some James Brown-type things in there. Just anything I want to do. I love it." ■





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### NEW RELEASES

1

**LILY ALLEN**  
**NO SHAME**  
PARLOPHONE

A tour de force of pop nous, Allen's fourth defied haters with sensitivity and caustic wit. Sparing no one, least herself, it conceded addictions (*Everything To Feel Something*), infidelities (*My One*) and tabloid persecutors (*Come On Then*), then, in *Three*, offered insight into the mother/child relationship.

2

**ELVIS COSTELLO  
& THE IMPOSTERS**  
**LOOK NOW**  
CONCORD

On arguably his finest collection since 1989's *Spike*, Costello combined his sometimes-acerbic articulacy with a heart-on-sleeve sentimentality so effective even Burt Bacharach and Carole King failed to eclipse him. From galloping opener *Under Lime* to Broadway-esque closer *He's Given Me Things*, this represented a master at work.

3

**JANELLE MONÁE**  
**DIRTY COMPUTER**  
ATLANTIC

"I'm not America's nightmare, I'm the American dream," *Crazy, Classic, Life* insisted, but uncomfortable truths like: "The same mistake, I'm in jail, you on top of shit" probably provoked American conservatives, as doubtless did *Django Jane's* "Let the vagina have a monologue". A feast of funk, hip-hop and R&B that former mentor Prince would applaud.

3



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**JENNIFER WARNES**ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE  
BMG RIGHTS MANAGEMENT

In contrast to her huge 1980s soundtrack duets, Jennifer (*I've Had The Time Of My Life* Warnes' first album in 17 years saw her return to the more intimate, understated style of her earliest work, reminding us all why she and Leonard Cohen were so close.

A welcome, comforting, gracious refuge from today's troubles.

9

**EMIKA**FALLING IN LOVE WITH SADNESS  
EMIKA RECORDS

The former Ninja Tune signing returned to the theme of 2017's *Melanfolie* (a symphony, no less!) with 10 tracks whose vulnerable humanity belied their glistening electronic production. As convincing in a club as in a lonely kitchen, tracks like *Run* and the stately *Promises* made this indispensable.

4

**THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE QUEEN**MERRIE LAND  
STUDIO 13

Following autumn's Gorillaz album, *The Now Now*, Damon Albarn reappeared alongside Simon Tong, Paul Simonon and Tony Allen to mourn the state of Brexit Britain. The title track's "We cheer on the clowns as they roll into town" encapsulated contemporary populism perfectly.

5

**TRACEY THORN**RECORD  
MERGE RECORDS

Wonderfully articulate, unreasonably calm (given contemporary sexual politics), and blessed by one of Britain's finest voices, Record found Thorn and favoured producer Ewan Pearson delivering "nine feminist bangers". Openly middle-aged, predominantly electronic, it was confrontational, celebratory and confessional, especially on *Dancefloor* and the epic, emancipated *Sister*.

6

**THE INTERNET**HIVE MIND  
COLUMBIA

A generous hour of neo-soul with grooves that often ran deeper than the Mariana Trench, as on *Beat Goes On*, which burst open halfway through to reveal its drum 'n' bass heart, and the seductive *Come Over*. *Wanna Be*, meanwhile, could have been the work of Erykah Badu herself.

8

**BRÜCKEN FROESE**

BEGINN

STRIKE FORCE  
ENTERTAINMENT/CHERRY RED

Propaganda's Claudia Brücken and Jerome Froese, son of Tangerine Dream's Edgar, validated their reputations on this album of moody synth-pop. Boasting skittering beats, sleek electronica and potent melodies – especially on *Cards* – it was also unafraid of the dark, as *Wounded* attested. If this was the *Beginn*, let there be a *Mitte* before the *Ende*...

10

**JOHNNY MARR**

CALL THE COMET

NEW VOODOO/WARNER

Finally emerging from a spotlight normally hogged by his increasingly cranky former Smiths colleague, guitar-hero Marr's third album may have sometimes lacked lyrical bite but still reclaimed his legendary group's legacy. *The Tracers* was as ferocious as *The Queen Is Dead*, and on *Hi Hello*, he out-Mozzed Mozza himself.

## COMPILATIONS

Ian Gittins' favourite collections of 2018

**1 NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL MUSIC! NOW**

One hundred albums into the never-ending, Spotify-defying chart-hit compilation series, *Now That's What I Call Music! put out this boxset featuring one song from each album. From Culture Club's *Karma Chameleon* to George Ezra's *Shotgun*, here was 35 years of British pop history.*

**2 SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER**

VIRGIN EMI

In 1978, its helium vocals and dazzling harmonies kept the Bee Gees-helmed *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack album at No.1 for a scarcely believable 18 weeks. Forty years on, its disco divinations such as *Stayin' Alive*, *You Should Be Dancing* and *Jive Talkin'* still sounded like freshly minted funky gospel.

**3 REVAMP: REIMAGINING THE SONGS OF ELTON JOHN & BERNIE TAUPIN**

VIRGIN EMI

Elt and Bernie have quite the stellar back catalogue to pick from and today's popsters filled their boots. Mary J Blige was awesome on *Sorry Seems To Be The Hardest Word*, Florence Welch blew the doors off *Tiny Dancer* and even Ed Sheeran's *Candle In The Wind* was oddly palatable.

**4 REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT: THE SOUND OF LIVERPOOL 1976-1988**

CHERRY RED

This exhaustive 5CD set, complete with 56-page booklet, celebrated all musical things Liverpool since the days of punk: Deaf School, Big In Japan, Echo & the Bunnymen, Teardrop Explodes, OMD, China Crisis, Dead Or Alive, A Flock Of Seagulls, Frankie... every Scouser going except, bizarrely, Pete Dinklage and Wah!

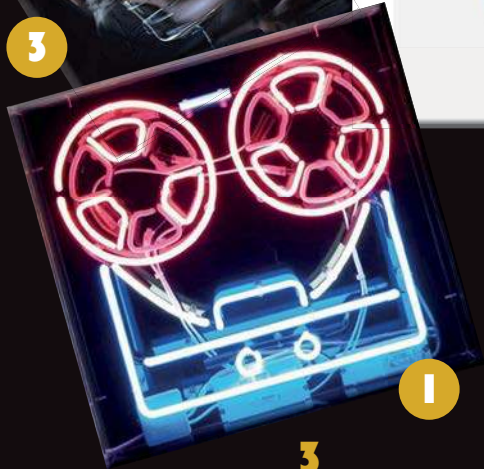
**5 STILL IN A DREAM - A STORY OF SHOEGAZE 1988-1995**

CHERRY RED

An early 90s music scene, shoegaze had its roots in the 80s swirl of the Cocteau Twins and The Jesus & Mary Chain. This 5CD set traced its lineage all the way through A.R. Kane and Loop to Ride and Lush.



## REISSUES



### 3 KATE BUSH KATE BUSH REMASTERED CD BOX 1 RHINO

The end of the year saw a tremendous reissue of Kate Bush's back catalogue in its entirety and here was the pick, collecting her albums from 1978's *The Kick Inside* to 1993's *The Red Shoes*. Fifteen years of insatiable, mystical folk-pop from this most quixotic of artists – here was a dreaming indeed.

### 6 DAVID BOWIE LOW/"HEROES"/LODGER PARLOPHONE

There was a fair degree of Bowie reissue action in 2018. Most people could take or leave his *Loving The Alien* 80s boxset, but this spring re-release of his audacious, experimental and brittle Berlin trilogy was essential: "My complete being is within those three [albums]," said Bowie. "They are my DNA."



### 1 SOFT CELL KEYCHAINS AND SNOWSTORMS: THE SOFT CELL STORY UNIVERSAL

After nearly 40 years of high camp and drama, Soft Cell were never going to head off with a mumbled "Tara, then." Here was the send-off they deserved: nine career-spanning CDs of insatiable electro-pop from a truly unique British duo.

### 4 THE POLICE EVERY MOVE YOU MAKE UMC

A general aversion to the preening Sting has meant The Police have at times failed to receive the kudos they are due, but this half-speed 11LP vinyl boxset confirmed them as spiky-haired kings of New Wave pop excellence – and the title track remains the best anthem about stalkers ever written.

### 7 THIS MORTAL COIL IT'LL END IN TEARS 4AD

4AD founder Ivo Watts-Russell's pet project found him corralling the label's artists into lush, gothic-romantic covers of his favourite songs. All three TMC albums were reissued this autumn, with 1984 debut *It'll End In Tears* the spectral standout: Liz Fraser's quaver on *Song To The Siren* soars to divinity and beyond.

### 9 YAZOO THREE PIECES MUTE

Or *Four Pieces*, if you preferred them on vinyl. This welcome reissue of Vince Clarke and Alison Moyet's two early-80s albums showed that few bands in that era came closer to marrying the robotic allure of early synth-pop with the classic heartbreak and soul of Tamla Motown.

### 2 PET SHOP BOYS PLEASE/ACTUALLY PARLOPHONE

Speaking of truly unique British duos... the Pet Shop Boys' *Further Listening* reissues are a lengthy and ongoing project but nothing in their canon surpasses the beauty and majesty of these first two albums, which bequeathed the world *West End Girls*, *Suburbia*, *Shopping*, *Rent* and *It's A Sin*. Utterly glorious.

### 5 PIXIES COME ON PILGRIM... IT'S SURFER ROSA 4AD

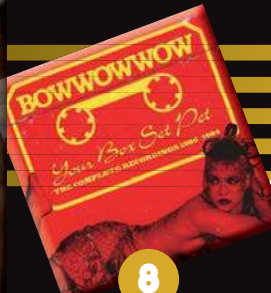
A reissue of the Pixies' game-changing first two albums, first released in 1987 and 1988. Scabrous white noise, feral Dick Dale surf guitar, outer-space fixations, guttural profanities yelled in Spanish AND that loud/quiet thing... no wonder David Bowie once called them the "psychotic Beatles".

### 8 BOW WOW WOW YOUR BOX SET PET: THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS (1980-1984) CHERRY RED

Malcolm McLaren's masterplan involved melding Burundi beats with sexual taboos. The result was a riotous one-off of a band with hooks to burn, even if the innuendo he ladled into the mouth of 14-year-old Annabella Lwin left a nasty after-taste.

### 10 PUBLIC IMAGE LIMITED THE PUBLIC IMAGE IS ROTTEN UNIVERSAL

One disc gathered PiL's wilful and wanton array of singles, from the bilious clarion call of *Public Image* through the acidic *Death Disco* to the honeyed earworm that was *Rise*. Four more boasted rarities and dance remixes. Not one fan of this colossal band got the feeling they'd been cheated.





## BOOKS

Our essential reading list covers hip-hop, fashion and fascinating autobiographies and a biography



## 1 BEASTIE BOYS BOOK

BEASTIE BOYS, FABER &amp; FABER

The ultimate companion to the music, artistry and ethos of one of the

US's most original and inspiring acts, *Beastie Boys Book* charts their rise from punks to bratty rappers, kings of cool and hip-hop's elder statesmen through touching and humorous anecdotes, thousands of photographs and memorabilia. Everything a band autobiography should be.



## 2 VOGUE X MUSIC

VOGUE MAGAZINE, ABRAMS

An exhaustive chronicle of the relationship between music and

fashion from the pages of the world's most esteemed style bible. *Vogue x Music* is packed with era-defining portraits of the biggest names in rock, pop, soul, jazz and rap in all their glory, courtesy of the past century's greatest imagemakers.



## 3 COAL BLACK MORNINGS

BRETT ANDERSON, LITTLE BROWN

An authentic account of the Suede frontman's

pre-fame life, exquisitely told in the manner you'd expect of a superb lyricist. Managing to perfectly evoke his working-class roots and awkward teen years before arriving in London, Anderson's warm and engaging memoir is impossible to put down.



## 4 MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY

LILY ALLEN, BLINK PUBLISHING

As the title suggests, *My Thoughts Exactly* is more

an account of someone attempting to make sense of everything that's happened to her – good and bad – than a straightforward autobiography, taking the reader along for the ride as she does so. At times witty, at others harrowing, always captivating.



## 5 MORRISSEY: ALONE AND PALELY LOITERING

KEVIN CUMMINS, CASSELL

A fantastic reminder of Morrissey and his

impact during his time in The Smiths and his early solo years, *Alone And Palely Loitering* comes as close as you can get to the mania of Mozz's live shows in the 80s and 90s and the sheer adoration in which he was, and is, held by his ever-faithful audience.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

2018 SAW TRIUMPHANT RETURNS FROM ALL SAINTS, GAZ COOMBES AND JOHNNY MARR

It's happened to Radiohead and Coldplay – now Arctic Monkeys have joined their ranks as a band whose frontman and songwriter has begun to wholly shape their artistic vision, rather freezing out the contribution of a stellar lead guitarist. My first reaction to the Sheffield quartet's new album *Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino* was essentially "Where the hell is Jamie Cook?", but Alex Turner's slow-burner has casually slunk into my list as a favourite of the year. All this while totally dispensing with the earworm hooks that made its predecessor *AM* so captivating.

Two recent *Classic Pop* cover stars have also turned out superlative new albums this year; Johnny Marr and All Saints. Marr's solo career continues to go from strength to strength. From the urgent riffing of opener *Rise* and a rare backwards glance via the Smiths *Hi Hello*, *Call The Comet* was packed with highlights and the eerie *Walk Into The Sea* is proof positive of a talent still loathed to rest on his guitar-hero laurels. All Saints were equally impressive, playing to their strengths yet still pushing their sound forward. Their career-best LP *Testament* features club bangers, pristine electro-pop and slinky modern R&B.

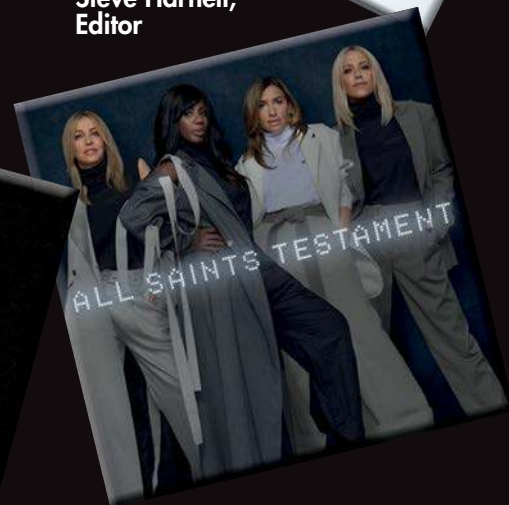
No doubt All Saints would have been equally struck as I was by the 80s R&B vibes of the excellent *Hive Mind* by The Internet. It's become the Californian outfit's worldwide breakthrough album, and quite rightly so.

Closer to home, Damon Albarn's heart-on-the-sleeve response to the Brexit debacle with The Good, The Bad & The Queen's *Merrie Land* struck a chord with me, while Gaz Coombes' evolution from cherubic Supergrass frontman into a multi-faceted singer-songwriter of the first order came to fruition with the sublime *World's Strongest Man*.

Few, if any, albums have matched an early standout for me this year – *All Nerve* by The Breeders. Done and dusted in little over 30 minutes, this was all killer and no filler, particularly lead single *Wait In The Car*.

Meanwhile, a constant stream of boxsets through CP's doors in 2018 has seen some impressive bells-and-whistles archival deep dives. Although both of the Wings albums *Wild Life* and *Red Rose Speedway* were middling at best, the range of extras in their associated boxes was astonishingly rich. Those behind the recent Howard Jones reissues of *Human's Lib* and *Dream Into Action* were equally thorough and imaginative. It's not always just about the music...

Steve Harnell,  
Editor





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# REVIEWS

## REVIEWS

### NEW RELEASES

P82

Our round-up of new singles, plus new albums from Trevor Horn, Joe Jackson, Lost Under Heaven, Fun Lovin' Criminals, Steve Mason, Maggie Rogers, The Carpenters, Jah Wobble, Ultramarine and Subjective

### REISSUES

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Simple Minds, Depeche Mode, Transvision Vamp, Siouxsie And The Banshees, Tanita Tikaram, Teenage Fanclub, Xymox, Dead Or Alive, Brian Eno, Manic Street Preachers and *Just A Bad Dream – Sixty British Garage And Trash Nuggets 1981-89*

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Heaven 17, Rick Astley, Blancmange, Johnny Marr and Ms. Lauryn Hill

## RATINGS

EXCELLENT ★★★★★

VERY GOOD ★★★★

AVERAGE ★★★

PATCHY ★★

POOR ★

**Jah Wobble shows there's still fire in his belly as the former PIL bassist releases his passionate new album, *The Butterfly Effect* – review on page 85**





## MATTHEW RUDD

THE HOST OF FORGOTTEN 80s ON ABSOLUTE 80s RADIO CHECKS OUT NEW RELEASES, INCLUDING FESTIVE CUTS FROM CLAIRE RICHARDS, KATY PERRY, GABRIELLE AND THE BAND PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS BUCKS FIZZ...



### CLAIRE RICHARDS

MY HEART IS HEADING HOME (THIS CHRISTMAS)

A sweet, festive dance record and a typically schmaltzy sentiment, replenished with compulsory sleigh bells. Hardly anybody will playlist it just because she's in Steps, but it's a strong melody, in possession of a soaring chorus and strident vocals throughout.



### THE STREETS (FEAT. CHIP & GRIM SICKERS)

CALL ME IN THE MORNING

Mike Skinner returns with more stream-of-consciousness rhymes under hip-hop rhythms with London rapper Chip doing a more X-rated second stanza and Grim Sickers chasing him down with a grimmer third. An acquired taste, but it's pretty good.



### KATY PERRY

COZY LITTLE CHRISTMAS

More sleigh bells from pressing play, introducing a quirky, mind's eye slab of festive pop purity, following the reliably self-motivating Perry recipe. The theme is a couple telling Santa to take the day off because they don't need him. It's mad.



### LOS UNIDADES & PHARRELL WILLIAMS (FEAT. JOZZY)

E-LO

Coldplay under a different name. The project has a brief to make music promoting global and economic unity, so the band have somehow become even more earnest, if that were possible.



### MARK RONSON FEAT. MILEY CYRUS

NOTHING BREAKS LIKE A HEART

This is a tremendous record. A growly vocal showcases a singer at the top of her game, with a country vibe to the acoustic backing track on top of a big-deal beat. Thought-provoking, cerebral stuff, but never loses its grip on an excellent melody.



### THE FIZZ

DON'T START WITHOUT ME

The Bucks Fizz discography is a huge favourite of the Forgotten 80s audience and there's masses of goodwill for the renamed, and slimmed down, incarnation, too. This festive release from their album *Christmas With The Fizz* sounds like a killer party you'd love to attend.



### BOYZONE

NORMAL BOY

Hard to understand why Boyzone have got back together, really, as life was adequate without them. This stop-start effort is difficult to follow, with screechy harmonies that grate and Ronan Keating trying just a bit too hard. The charitable would say it may grow on you.



### GABRIELLE

THIS CHRISTMAS

Gabrielle's voice remains outstanding, but this festive song doesn't have an addictive enough hook or original enough sentiment to suggest it'll be on seasonal sellists for years to come. At less than three minutes, it feels like all its innovation was edited out. A shame, really.





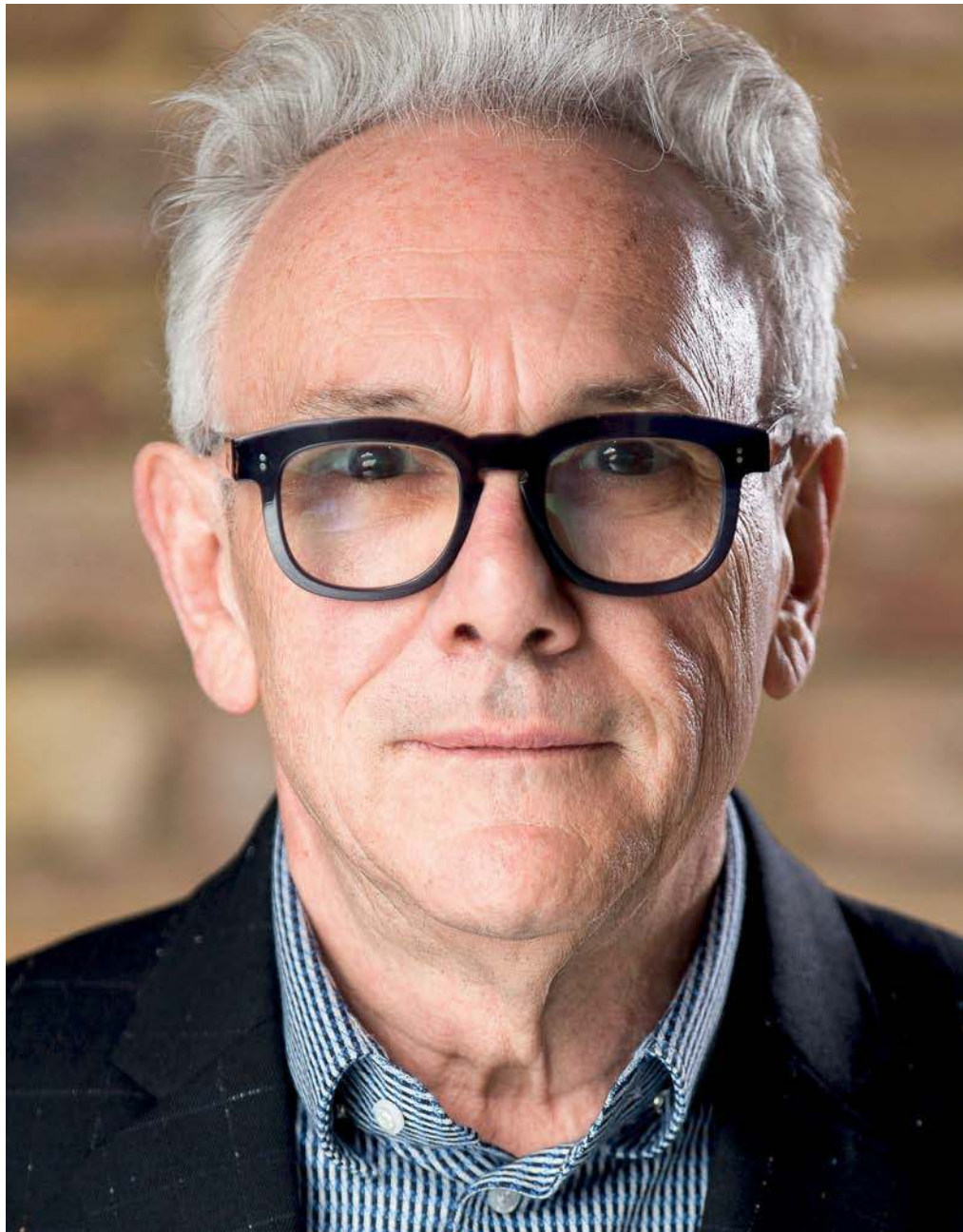
with work for acts like Frankie Goes To Hollywood, Art Of Noise and ABC, Horn naturally has more right than most to reinterpret such classics. Rarely known for restraint, here he brings more than 50 string, brass and woodwind players to bear on a selection of smashes, a handful of them very much associated with him, others less so. For the most part, though, what he and arranger Julian Hinton offer sounds like a commission to score a lost James Bond film, putting even Duran Duran's *A View To A Kill* in the shade. As Roger Moore advised in *Live And Let Die*, "There's no sense going out half-cocked".

Take *Owner Of A Lonely Heart*, which allows the former Yes member to shine as vocalist before its middle section receives a dramatic, jazzy makeover, or Frankie's *The Power Of Love*, whose strings advance like an army on an admittedly lacklustre Matt Cardle. Meanwhile, with Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill on board, Dire Straits' *Brothers In Arms* slowly grows even bigger than those "mist-coloured mountains", and no one can subdue Tony Hadley on a Godzilla-like *What's Love Got To Do With It?*. Horn's reimaginings even climax with a boisterous version of New Order's *Blue Monday*, oddly – but effectively – starring Imperial Crown's Jimmie Wood as a more obviously euphonious Bernard Sumner.

Sadly, on *Everybody Wants To Rule The World*, Robbie Williams lacks the original's passion, while Seal renders *Ashes To Ashes* a little less

outlandish. Instead, Rumer and Eska's comparatively discreet *Slave To The Rhythm* and Gabrielle Aplin's swooning take on Springsteen's *Dancing In The*

*Dark* prove most enduring. Sometimes, it turns out, less can be more. **Wyndham Wallace**



## TREVOR HORN REIMAGINES THE EIGHTIES FEAT. THE SARM ORCHESTRA

BMG



THE ILLUSTRIOUS PRODUCER, BUGGLE, AND ZTT RECORDS FOUNDER TURNS BACK THE CLOCK, AND HE'S NOT JUST BLOWING HIS OWN HORN...

There's currently no shortage of folk touting orchestral versions of popular tunes. Sophie Ellis-Bextor, for instance, is finishing *The Song Diaries*, a long-promised set of rearranged hits, while Hanson's *String Theory*, featuring songs old and new arranged by – seriously – Beck's dad, has just reached stores. We've also suffered compilations, including Pete Tong's *Ibiza Classics*, and

this latest collection of decadent reinterpretations – its content drawing on hits from *Classic Pop*'s favourite decade – comes hot on the heels of the similarly embroidered *80s Symphonic*.

There's something different about this one, though: it's overseen by legendary producer Trevor Horn. Having helped shape the era's sound





## JOE JACKSON FOOL

EARMUSIC



The other day, your glamorous correspondent was chatting with Trevor Horn – as one does – when conversation turned to his new covers album. “Joe Jackson’s a brilliant writer,” Horn gushed. “I kept thinking of doing *Stepping Out*, but loved *Different For Girls*.” It was the latter on which Horn settled, a reminder of just how gripping New Wave Jackson could be before he immersed himself in jazz and, later, classical music. Horn and your intrepid reporter

agreed: it was good to hear the song again.

Jackson, of course, indicated with 2015’s *Fast Forward* – its four ‘sides’ recorded in four different cities – that, despite his occasional jazz proclivities, he was slowly returning to his more familiar, early style. *Fool*, it’s gratifying to discover, maintains this intent, his voice – not unlike Elvis Costello’s – dancing restlessly over his sophisticated arrangements, while occasionally adopting the gobby delivery of old to deliver his sing-song melodies. Listen to him dart around on *Dave*, his band unexpectedly – but supportively – changing keys with him as he debates the relative pleasures of global travel and a simple life: “Dave watches the waves/ They come and go so he don’t have to.”

The line’s indicative of Jackson’s often incisive wordplay, boldly displayed



© John Huba

on *Fabulously Absolute*, where he listens, sometimes sympathetically, sometimes mordantly, to the complaints of those whose votes are patronisingly taken for granted by liberals and cynically won by Trump-like populists. “I’m a sexist and a slob!/ I’m a jerk/ I want a job!” he spits, his frantic, post-punk backing combining Primus-like complexity and cheap B-movie keyboard lines both aggravating and appealing.

Opener *Big Black Cloud* offers a similar bitterness, his delivery’s malevolence matched by ominously descending, hammered piano chords, but there’s peace in *32 Kisses*’ nostalgic affection and playfulness in the title track’s stew of Celtic and Hispanic influences. With *Alchemy*’s pizzicato elegance winding things up, *Fool* confirms it’s not just Trevor Horn who thinks Jackson can still look pretty sharp. **WW**

## LOST UNDER HEAVEN LOVE HATES WHAT YOU BECOME

MUTE



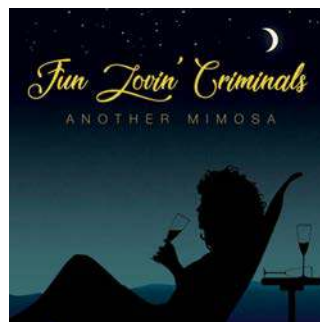
Lost Under Heaven are the kind of intense, arty types given to namedropping Cassavetes and Fassbinder, savouring squalor – they term the Manchester junction beneath their home “a crossroads of desolation” – and taking themselves very seriously indeed. It’s all too easy to imagine former WU LYF-er Ellery James Roberts and musical/romantic partner Ebony Hoorn publicly eating each other’s faces before ranting about contemporary dystopia and writing a song called

Come. “It’s about our mutual urge to ‘transcend our duality,’” they’ll say, but a lyric like “Other men they’d lie to you/ But I want to feel deep inside of you” makes the title’s innuendo inescapable. Remember Spinal Tap’s *Lick My Love Pump*?

The song, though, is ruthless, Roberts’ godless shriek rising amid the rubble of brutalist slabs of synth, and the album starts as it ends, with the towering Joy-Division-play-Depeche-Mode of *For The Wild*. Even quieter numbers overflow with tension: *Bunny’s Blues* may grumble, “You don’t understand me”, but its climactic, flatulent synths roar, while *Savage Messiah* recalls prime Swans, perhaps aided by former drummer Thor Harris. Hoorn, meanwhile, swings between ethereal, Liz Fraser spirituality (*Most High*) and opiated Polly-Harvey-meets-Kim-Gordon ennui (*Black Sun Rising*). Lost Under Heaven: fucking hell! **WW**

## FUN LOVIN’ CRIMINALS ANOTHER MIMOSA

DIFONTAINE



There’s something peculiar about tough guys Fun Lovin’ Criminals covering The Notorious B.I.G.’s *Warning*. If a song opens by asking “Who the fuck is this?”, then acknowledges “They wanna stick the knife through your windpipe”, before ending with a shooting, one expects a better solution for the ‘N word’ – employed 15 times – than to beep it. But while Huey Morgan’s always flexed his muscles and tossed out drug references – *Scooby*

*Snacks, The Bong Remains The Same* – he’s not really so hard: remember how he co-hosted an entire season of *Liza & Huey’s Pet Nation*?

That’s the band’s problem: there’s plenty of posturing, but not much invention. So, like 1999’s *Mimosa*, whose 20th anniversary this celebrates, they spend most of their time here paying tribute to their heroes. Neil Diamond’s *Hello Again* swaps its sentiment for a funky swagger, Freddie King’s bluesy *Going Down* could be ZZ Top covering ELO, and Bobby Womack’s *Daylight* sacrifices sweet soul for acid jazz. Morgan also growls through Procul Harum’s *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* like William Shatner declaiming Sarah Palin’s speeches. Their own *Love Unlimited* is sped up, and they take a load off *Southside*, but it’s a lot to ask for one truly new track, the perky, phlegmy *Sunset*. **WW**



## STEVE MASON ABOUT THE LIGHT

DOUBLE SIX

★★★★★



Why isn't Steve Mason stopped by crowds every time he pops out for a pint? Wikipedia insists he's still "best known as the lead singer and one of the founding members of The Beta Band", but they split up 14 years ago, and, aside from further albums under the names King Biscuit Time and Black Affair, this is now his fourth solo LP. Nevertheless, while he's yet to eclipse his first band's success, the signs are encouraging: if such things

matter nowadays, his last two albums have at least broken the British Top 40.

Whatever's maintaining his relative anonymity, it's certainly not his songs, nor their presentation. Blessed with a plaintive voice that tickles the soul, Mason excels at affectionate displays of unity – the uplifting *Rocket* climaxes with an anthemic singalong worthy of Elbow: "All the people say 'Oh...' – and moments of wonder, like the charming *Fox On The Rooftop's* opening line, "I saw a fox after midnight". He also affords us *Stars Around My Heart's* funk-fuelled stomp, *Walking Away from Love's* energetic rockabilly vibes, and *America Is Your Boyfriend's* fabulous, if currently puzzling, euphoria.

If the closing, triumphantly brassy *The End* doesn't win you over, perhaps nothing ever will. **WW**

## MAGGIE ROGERS HEARD IT IN A PAST LIFE

POLYDOR

★★★★★



Who doesn't love a good rags to riches story? America's Maggie Rogers was 'discovered' by Pharrell Williams in 2016, and by the world when video of his reaction to her song *Alaska* went viral. She's spent the years since preparing this 12-track collection, with appearances on *The Tonight Show* and *Saturday Night Live*, and there's no doubt she's got a hell of a voice, plus more than a couple of memorable tunes.

The truth, though, is that Rogers wasn't exactly plucked from nowhere. Brought up in privileged surroundings, she studied at the prestigious Berklee College Of Music, and this isn't even her debut: she'd already self-released two albums by 2014, and recycles some of their tunes here. One doesn't choose one's background, of course, but it's disappointing that, despite Williams' verdict that "You're doing your own thing", Rogers doesn't appear to be especially imaginative.

Opener *Give A Little* is a dainty, shuffling number with cute synth riffs, and her voice unwinds within *Light On's* smooth, 80s-flavoured production. *Say It* slows things down and strips them back, but, *Alongside On + Off's* eccentric grooves, *Alaska* remains the highlight of this frustratingly generic set. **WW**

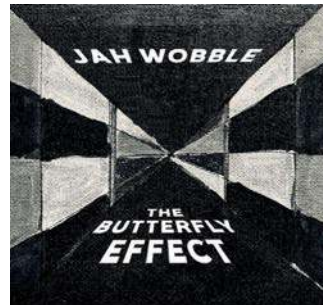


### THE CARPENTERS THE CARPENTERS WITH THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

UMC

★★★★★

From Erasure to Ian McCulloch, artists today continue to 'reimagine' their hits. Now Richard Carpenter's gratuitously rearranged 18 of his duo's cherished tunes, and, if you already thought of them as Easy Listening, his actions will merely underline their Disney-like character. Karen Carpenter's voice remains untouchably forlorn on evergreen *Close To You* and heartrending on *Rainy Days And Monday*, but the itch to add strings to old chestnuts – like they're conkers – appears inexplicably contagious. **WW**



### JAH WOBBLE THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

JAH WOBBLE RECORDS

★★★★★

"You can feel the undercurrent of anger/ So never mind the billowing ganja," Wobble declares, free jazz rumbling around him, on *The Iron Lady Got Rust*, before dissecting Thatcher's legacy like a street poet wielding a bass as a weapon and setting the tone for his most impassioned album in years. The title track offers vicious echoes of post-punk Wire, while he takes aim at smug irony on *The Post Modern Age*, but closer *I Love Your Accent* is like The Streets for the Clarks Commandos generation. There's no smoke without fire. **WW**

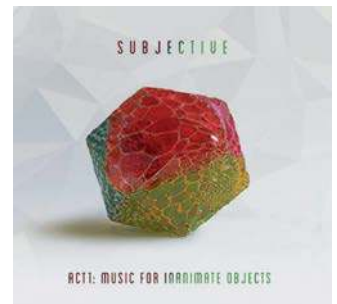


### ULTRAMARINE SIGNALS INTO SPACE

LES DISQUES DU CREPUSCULE

★★★★★

Back on the label where they started their career in 1989, Ultramarine return with their second album since their 15-year sabbatical. This time they're sporadically accompanied by former labelmate Anna Domino, most notably on *Spark From Flint To Clay*, her nonchalant voice wreathed in wisps of synth amid quietly simmering beats. Elsewhere, their pastoral leanings remain evident in *Du Sud's* minimalist serenity, while Ian Bellamy's sax threads through *Breathing's* Arcadian rhythms and distracts from *Sleight Of Hand's* wind chimes. **WW**



### SUBJECTIVE ACT ONE – MUSIC FOR INANIMATE OBJECTS

SONY MUSIC MASTERWORKS

★★★★★

Goldie MBE pairs up with James Davidson, co-producer on 2017's *The Journey Man*, for 70 minutes of comedown music that definitely wouldn't shame Zero 7. Inevitably, they scratch the drum 'n' bass itch with, for instance, placid opener *Midnight Monsoon* and, more obviously, *Landscape – Portrait's* Cinematic Orchestra vibes, plus Stay's mechanical beats and bubbly bass. But they also explore ambient on *Silent Running* and add samples from Serengeti to *Inkolelo*, while two versions of *Find Your Light* defy hackneyed lyrics to soothe the soul. **WW**





## SIMPLE MINDS REJUVENATION 2001-2014

DEMON



SIMPLE MINDS HAVE ENJOYED A WELCOME RENAISSANCE IN RECENT TIMES – AND THIS NEW BOXSET CHARTS THEIR CREATIVE RENEWAL IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Old doesn't turn to shit overnight. Diamonds don't dissolve to dust. The accepted view that Simple Minds, in their early years the most precious and molten of electro-dreamers, succumbed to hubris and became bombastic and worthless, is simply too pat.

That said, there is no doubt they had wilderness years. Speaking to *Classic Pop* this year, Jim Kerr freely confessed that his band spent the early 21st-century flatlining: "You find out a lot about yourself when you're in a van driving to a half-full club, past a stadium that you once sold out." Those fallow years may not appear a

period ripe for anthologising, yet this new 6LP coloured-vinyl studio albums boxset, with three of the albums out on vinyl for the first time, tells a more complex story than you might expect. Even when the Minds lost their way, they had a pulse.

Their nadir was 2001 covers album *Neon Lights*. Their windy takes on Bowie, Patti Smith, Kraftwerk, The Doors and Roxy Music were sleek but added nothing to the originals, and turning Joy Division's *Love Will Tear Us Apart* into a jaunty electro ditty was truly baffling.

Next year's *Cry* was little better, a turgid plod through the motions where only the Vince

Clarke-penned *The Floating World* showed any signs of life. Its chart placing of No.80 seemed entirely apt but then, a recovery began.

*Black & White 050505* (2005) opened with the potent *Stay Visible*, a charged return to the epic grandeur of early career jewels such as *Glittering*

*Prize*, and spawned the halting single *Different World*. It was a turning point. After all of the bluster, Simple Minds were striving to be intimate again.

By 2009's *Graffiti Soul*, they were back in the Top 10 and, on songs like the thrumming *Rockets* and hell-for-leather *This Is It*, Kerr had relocated his soul as Charlie Burchill's guitar was once again spitting out miracles. *Moscow Underground* even found them re-embracing *I Travel-style* motorik: a most welcome development.

The title of 2014's *Big Music* was ominous, as if heralding a return to the portentous flatulence that had derailed them. Yet it was misleading, since tracks like *Blindfolded* and *Honest Town* were as poised and charged as anything they had crafted since *New Gold Dream* (81-82-83-84).

The takeaway from *Rejuvenation*? That Simple Minds' journey out of their wilderness years was not an easy one – but at least they eventually found a way home.

Ian Gittins





## DEPECHE MODE CONSTRUCTION TIME AGAIN – THE 12" SINGLES / SOME GREAT REWARD – THE 12" SINGLES

SONY



Hot on the heels of August's release of the 12" singles from *Speak & Spell* and *A Broken Frame*, Depeche Mode now release 12" boxsets of the extended singles from their third and fourth albums, each containing six vinyl discs of original tracks, live versions and B-sides.

If *A Broken Frame* had largely captured a confused band in flux after the abrupt departure of Vince Clarke, by 1983's *Construction Time Again*, it was a very different story. Alan Wilder was now a full-time member, while Mute boss Daniel Miller

had bought a gold-standard Synclavier II digital synthesiser.

The band wrestled with this state-of-the-art technology, as showcased by Quincy Jones on Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, for weeks to produce the non-album single, *Get The Balance Right!*. It was not Martin Gore's finest moment, and he later declared it his least-favourite Mode single: "I hate it, and I wrote it!" *Construction Time Again*'s singles were more alluring: the totemic *Everything Counts* and teasing *Love, In Itself*. Bonus material here includes live versions of *Tora! Tora!*, *New Life* and *The Meaning Of Love*.



© Michael Putland/Getty Images

*Some Great Reward* (1984) was a patchy album, but it yielded some stunning singles. Embarrassed by its lyrical gaucheness, the band were to semi-disown *People Are People* (although its New Order-

like Adrian Sherwood mix, included here, is tremendous), but *Master And Servant*, with Dave Gahan's rich baritone croon sounding irresistible, was their very first S&M-referencing pervy classic.

They were by now firmly in taboo-bashing Mode, as shown by the sleek, sensuous *Blasphemous Rumours*, while extra tracks include live takes on *Two Minute Warning*, debut single *Dreaming Of Me*'s B-side *Ice Machine* and, somewhat superfluously, *Everything Counts* (twice). Depeche completists will snap these gems up, as they will the rest of the series – but there is plenty here for more casual fans, too. **IG**



## TRANSVISION VAMP I WANT YOUR LOVE

DEMON



Transvision Vamp were a glorious cartoon of a band. Flash, trashy, peddling defiantly recycled riffs and fronted by the pouting blonde ambition of Wendy James, they always looked likely to dispense a volley of pop thrills, then vanish into the ether.

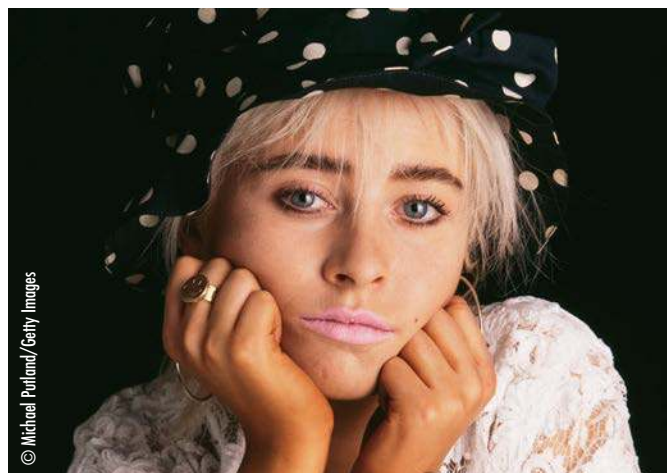
And while that was certainly how it worked out, at least they turned out to be a lot of fun along the way. Even as chin-stroking critics carped at the obviousness of their cut-and-paste cultural collage – a morsel of Monroe, a dash of Clash, a glitter of glam – they gave us some glorious tunes.

That's why it's no surprise that this 3LP coloured-vinyl boxset of their three albums confirms that TV were hit and miss but

when they hit, they impacted. Their debut, 1988's *Pop Art*, nicked riffs from T. Rex, boasted songs called things like *Andy Warhol's Dead* and *Sex Kick*, and spawned a Top Five hit in the breathless *I Want Your Love*. It all looked too easy.

It looked even more so when the next year's *Velveten* hit No.1 and produced the riotous *Baby I Don't Care*, but it soon became clear that the joke was wearing thin.

The attitudinal James's bubblegum-Debbie Harry shtick began to grate as the songs floundered: like *Pop Art*, *Velveten* ran out of gas halfway through.



© Michael Putland/Getty Images

They had to try something new, but 1991's relatively leftfield *Little Magnets Versus The Bubble Of Babble*, with its psychedelic leanings and Bob Dylan cover, meandered up its own fundament, an overcooked curate's egg. When

its two forgettable lead singles stiffed, MCA Records panicked and binned the album.

The resulting split was inevitable and ultimately, for all of their pop-punk spark and swagger, Transvision Vamp's mouth wrote cheques that their tunes couldn't cash. That can be a problem with cartoons: they're just not believable. **IG**





## SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES KALEIDOSCOPE/HYAENA/PEEPSHOW/ THE RAPTURE

GEFFEN



Geffen wrap up their Siouxsie And The Banshees vinyl reissue programme with half-speed remasterings of four non-sequential albums from the band's career. The strongest re-release is 1980's *Kaleidoscope*, which saw them honing their peculiarly austere strain of psychedelia and reached its apogee in the melodic yet abrasive post-punk singles *Happy House*, *Christine* and *Israel*. By 1984's *Hyaena*

(the first album on Geffen), they were majoring in brooding atmospherics and meticulous songcraft which lacked the killer choruses and pop smarts of their earlier days (this no-extras vinyl reissue omits the cover of *Dear Prudence* that was added to the record in the US). *Peepshow* (1988) represented a late-career reflowering, with Siouxsie in imperious voice as the band experimented with dance rhythms on *Peek-A-Boo* and added lush cello to tunes such as *The Killing Jar*. *Turn To Stone* almost birthed an unlikely new genre: Gothic flamenco.

Part-produced by John Cale, there was a decided *fin de siècle* feel to 1995's *The Rapture*, despite the Pretenders-like, atypically cheery Top 40 single *O Baby*. After touring to promote it, The Banshees split. More than 20 years on, they are still missed. **IG**

## TANITA TIKARAM ANCIENT HEART

MUSIC ON VINYL



When Tanita Tikaram's earnest, sober-sided debut, *Ancient Heart*, appeared in 1988, condescending critics queued to accuse her of penning sixth-form poetry. There again, she had a decent excuse... she was a sixth-form student at the time.

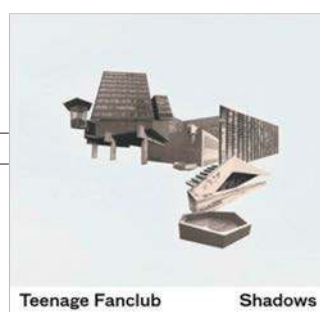
The demure Tikaram was famously just 19 when she passed up the chance to study English and American Literature at Manchester University to release and promote her adolescent album. Since it then went on to sell four million

copies, it's safe to say she made the right decision.

Yet *Ancient Heart* was a strange creature, a jazz-folky, over-written musing on the travails of the world by a girl hardly old enough to vote. In thrall to the likes of Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell, at times, it couldn't also help evoke Adrian Mole.

Tikaram had a husky murmur of a voice, a way with melodies and a penchant for über-cryptic lyrics. On *Good Tradition*, she sounded old before her time: Terry Eagleton would have retired hurt from trying to decipher *Twist In My Sobriety*. Yet still they charmed.

Thirty years on, the CD re-release boasts bonus B-sides *Friends* and *I Love The Heaven's Solo*, while the original LP is reissued on limited-edition clear vinyl in a gatefold sleeve. As a textbook case of growing up in public, *Ancient Heart* has aged surprisingly well. **IG**



## TEENAGE FANCLUB MAN-MADE/SHADOWS

REPUBLIC OF MUSIC



More Byrds-hued minor-key melancholia from Teenage Fanclub, who are putting out vinyl-only reissues of two of their early 21st-century albums. The first print runs of each record come with a bonus 7" single of live favourites and unreleased material: 2005's *Man-Made* boasts two contemporaneous B-sides in *Falling Leaf* and *Please Stay*, while 2010's *Shadows* is augmented with *Dark And Lonely Night* and *Secret Heart*. Teenage Fanclub's piquant, sun-dappled West Coast-via-Scotland harmonies, as ever, come free with every tune. **IG**

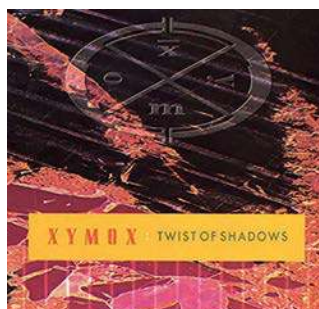


## VARIOUS ARTISTS JUST A BAD DREAM – SIXTY BRITISH GARAGE AND TRASH NUGGETS 1981-89

CHERRY RED



Drawing on elements of psych-rock, mod and rockabilly, the garage-rock revival movement of the 80s was a fringe scene of frantic energy, loud, lairy riffs and chaotic gigs. This 3CD set chucks together a bunch of its prime movers, including Thee Milkshakes, The Barracudas, The Meteors and King Kurt. The Jesus And Mary Chain's *Vegetable Man* is so primitive, it's hard to tell if they're holding their guitars the right way up, but *Go Gorilla* by Ug & The Cavemen is great. Dumb fun. **IG**

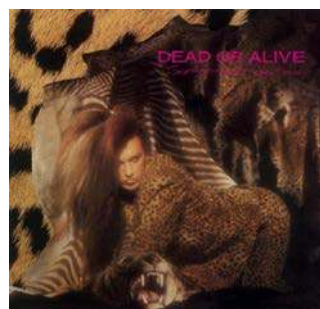


## XYMOX TWIST OF SHADOWS

PYLON



Originally trading as Clan Of Xymox and branded "darkwave" by John Peel, Dutch Goths Xymox first peddled their reverb-heavy doom-rock on 4AD before transferring to PolyGram for their 1989 third album, *Twist Of Shadows*. It earned them cult status in the US, where early-New Order-like dance-tinged singles *Obsession* and *Imagination* even edged into the Billboard chart. This 2CD/2LP reissue therefore comes with a plethora of US club, dance and dub remixes. The Tony Visconti string-section arrangements and Vaughan Oliver-designed sleeve are lovely tunes. **IG**



## DEAD OR ALIVE SOPHISTICATED BOOM BOOM

MUSIC ON VINYL



Another month, another Dead Or Alive reissue, this time a limited-edition (1,000 copies only) re-release on orange/black vinyl of their 1984 debut, *Sophisticated Boom Boom*. A riot of hyperventilating HiNRG synth doodles and Pete Burns' über-camp vocals, it yielded a Top 30 hit in an enjoyably tacky romp through KC And The Sunshine Band's disco staple *That's The Way (I Like It)*.

Their own early material was less stellar: the spirited *Misty Circles* and *Far Too Hard* bowled along defiantly, but Burns' chutzpah had to bail out some distinctly flimsy tunes. **IG**



JANUARY 2019  
**CLASSIC  
 POP**  
 BEST REISSUE

© Roberta Bayley/Redferns

# BRIAN ENO

## DISCREET MUSIC/MUSIC FOR FILMS/AMBIENT 1: MUSIC FOR AIRPORTS/AMBIENT 4: ON LAND

ASTRALWERKS



A COLLECTION OF EXPERIMENTAL, CONCEPTUAL, BEAUTIFULLY CRAFTED ELECTRONIC WORKS WHICH INDIRECTLY EARNED BRIAN ENO THE TITLE OF 'PIONEER OF AMBIENT MUSIC'

**B**rian Eno never claimed to have invented ambient music. Yet listening again to these four crucial albums from his hugely fertile 1975-'82 period, remastered at 45RPM on 2LP heavyweight vinyl, it's clear his fingerprints were all over it.

Although he was already influenced by the *musique d'ameublement* (furniture music) of Erik Satie, Eno tells a fascinating tale of his own portal into ambient. As he recuperated from an accident in hospital, listening to 18th-century harp music at low volume, it merged with the sound of rain on his window: "This presented for me what was a new way of hearing

music – as part of the ambience of the environment."

This epiphany inspired his 1975 *Discreet Music* album – or, rather, its first side, a 31-minute meditative piece of the same name formed of two overlapping tape loops of serene electronica (Side Two, a series of variations on a Pachelbel score, was rather less essential).

Eno knew he was on to something, and *Music For Films* was a set of instrumental snatches to soundtrack imaginary movies. Their brevity makes it a rarity in his canon: only one was longer than four minutes, with many over within 90 seconds.

They were titbits, mere *amuse-bouches* next to Eno's masterwork, 1978's *Ambient*

*1: Music For Airports*. Irritated during an hours-long wait at Cologne airport by the banal muzak that passengers were subjected to, he sought to craft an idyllic alternative.

He succeeded. *Music For Airports* was sublime, beatific: its four tape-loop compositions hovered near to, or beyond, silence. In a sleevenote, Eno

explained he had coined a phrase, 'Ambient music', for this new genre: "It is intended to induce calm and a space to think... it must be as ignorable as it is interesting."

His focus had shifted by 1982's *Ambient 4: On Land*, on which he partly eschewed conventional instrumentation for nature and animal noises and other found sounds (he used the same methodology on his David Byrne collaboration, *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*). It was thus a less reassuring, more unsettling work.

A diminished term, 'ambient music' is now applied to anything from New Age slop to tepid flotation-tank soundtracks. It has become the muzak that Brian Eno opposed... he must appreciate the irony. **IG**







© Paul Bergen/Redlens

## MANIC STREET PREACHERS THIS IS MY TRUTH TELL ME YOURS

COLUMBIA / SONY

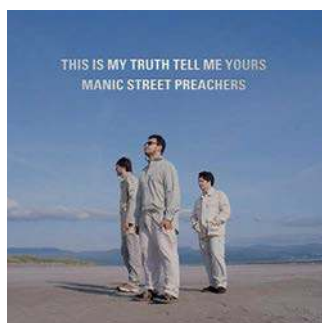


THIS 1998 ALBUM MARKED A CHANGE IN MUSICAL DIRECTION AND FORGED A BLUEPRINT THAT WOULD SERVE THE WELSH FIREBRANDS WELL FOR THE NEXT TWO DECADES

**M**anic Street Preachers were pathological agents provocateurs right from the moment of their inception. When they boasted of their plans to make a million-selling debut album and then, deaf to the pleas of fans, split, or possibly to set fire to themselves on *Top Of The Pops*, they always presented themselves as uncompromising ideological purists.

This fervent mindset yielded a devoted cult following and cerebral, challenging documents such as 1994's *The Holy Bible* album – but it was not to trigger their commercial Great Leap Forward. That came with 1996's *Everything Must Go* and, even more so, this 1998 album, now reissued in

a 3CD/2LP 20th-anniversary boxset. If *Everything Must Go* had found the Manics still reeling from the 1995 disappearance of Richey Edwards, *This Is My Truth Tell Me Yours* sounded like a band who had found a way forward. It cleaved to their core principles and yet, post-Richey, they no longer sounded wary of such bourgeois concepts as radio-friendly melodies.



The title came from a landmark speech by a fellow Welsh firebrand, Aneurin Bevan, and with Nicky Wire now taking on sole songwriting duties, the album teemed with provocative content. *Tsunami* told the true story of June and Jennifer Gibbons, the Welsh 'Silent Twins' resident in Broadmoor who would talk only to each other; *S.Y.M.M.* castigated South Yorkshire Police for their handling of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster.

Yet these hard nuggets of truth were now couched in vivid, vivacious sweeps of arena-sized rock. *The Everlasting* hummed with existential angst, yet did so to a soundtrack of tender soft rock; *If You Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next* was both an anti-fascist rallying call and a brilliant, insidious earworm. These singles and the

bittersweet *You Stole The Sun From My Heart* made *This Is My Truth Tell Me Yours* the Manics' first and, to date, only No.1 album and, 20 years on, this reissue's bonus tracks add to its continuing allure.

There are demos of every track, with James and Nicky seemingly talking of sounding "fairly dark, like Richey" before an acoustic strum through *Black Dog On My Shoulder*; the symphonic *Massive Attack* and David Holmes remixes of *If You Tolerate This...* are glorious.

The raw, attitudinal early Manic Street Preachers would have hooted with disdain at such a retro concept as an ageing band re-releasing a 20-year-old album and then taking it on tour, as they are next year. But hearing this again now, the project feels entirely worthwhile. **IG**



## CHARLES MORIARTY BACK TO AMY

CASSELL ILLUSTRATED



Fifteen years ago, Charles Moriarty was hired to photograph an up-and-coming singer to publicise her debut album. He developed an instant connection with Amy Winehouse, a streetwise chanteuse whose modern take on jazz would ensure that she would barely exist without a camera pointed at her for the rest of her short life. But in two sessions – one in New York, one in London – Moriarty captured the essence of Winehouse, an amalgamation of contemporary streetstyle, old-school glamour and childlike vulnerability.

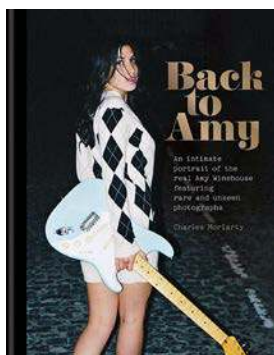
Having previously shared many of his photographs in a

Kickstarter-funded book *Before Frank*, Charles has compiled *Back To Amy*, a new volume that includes unseen images which, when featured alongside personal anecdotes from the

star's friends, former band members and her mother Janis, take on an even more vital role in preserving her legacy.

Revealing that Amy wanted the shoots to be "as real as can be", Charles' photographs portray her as

fresh-faced, vibrant and playful, brimming with optimism and heartbreakingly oblivious to the pain and tragedy that the thing she loved most – her music – would bring her. A beautiful tribute. **Mark Lindores**



## TINA TURNER MY LOVE STORY

CENTURY



In the 32 years since Tina Turner published her first autobiography *I, Tina*, her life story has become widely known due to that book, the film *What's Love Got To Do With It?* that was based on it and a recent West End musical. Which begs the question, is there anything else we don't know?

The answer is yes, quite a bit. *My Love Story*, published to mark the 60th anniversary of Tina's career, covers the same ground as *I, Tina*, yet delves deeper into her impoverished childhood, turbulent marriage to Ike and the brutality that blighted their rise to success.

After horror stories such as him taking her to a brothel

on their wedding night and the frequent beatings he'd administer, the book takes a more hopeful direction as Tina breaks away from Ike with nothing and rebuilds her life and career to become the queen of rock 'n' roll, finally finding happiness with husband Erwin Bach. With Turner seemingly finding peace and a quiet life in Switzerland, the book takes an unexpected twist as it recounts how illness has blighted the past five years

of her life as she has battled various health issues – kidney failure, cancer and strokes – as well as enduring the tragic suicide of her son earlier this year. A story of survival as much as it is love. **ML**



## CHRIS STEIN POINT OF VIEW: ME, NEW YORK CITY AND THE PUNK SCENE

RIZZOLI



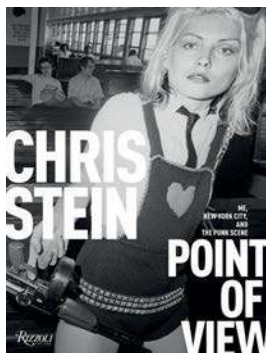
A sequel to Blondie's Chris Stein's previous tome *Negative*, he once again delves into his archives for an equally impressive collection of photographs taken during his time at the epicentre of New York's most creative and vibrant period.

Bookended by shots of the World Trade Centre, both in the 70s and crumbling during the 2001 attack, Stein says it's emblematic of New York's descent into commercial deterioration. As well as stunning shots of Debbie Harry, Stein captures an eclectic supporting cast. Andy Warhol,

David Bowie and Iggy Pop all put in appearances, although the book is far more than a collection of celebrity shots. New York's mean streets,

characterised by the graffiti-daubed walls and torn-down buildings that provided artistic havens for many of the city's influential musicians, artists and writers, are documented in all their gritty realism.

From the unique perspective afforded him as a member of Blondie, with *Point Of View*, Stein offers us mere mortals a glimpse into New York's long-gone creative playground. **ML**



## BROS BROS: AFTER THE SCREAMING STOPS

SPIRIT ENTERTAINMENT LTD



In what turned out to be the most overhyped comeback in recent years, "the biggest reunion in pop history" as it was billed turned out to be anything but, when lack of interest (possibly due to the hugely inflated ticket prices) saw a planned UK tour shelved, leaving Bros obligated to just perform a pair of shows at the O2 Arena.

After *The Screaming Stops* takes its name from a question Terry Wogan asked the Goss brothers at the peak of Brosmania about what they saw in their future.

The film takes a warts-and-all look at the build-up to those O2 Arena shows, telling a story

of stardom lost, sibling rivalry and self-acceptance.

After a recap of Bros' astronomical rise to fame and fortune in the late 80s, it catches up with the Goss

brothers in the here and now – Luke is an actor in films such as *Blade 2* and *Hellboy 2* while Matt has had a Las Vegas residency. The countdown to the reunion shows then rips open the old wounds that have seemingly never healed.

With awkward exchanges aplenty and musings from Matt that often veer towards mockumentary territory, *After The Screaming Stops* makes for an entertaining, yet uncomfortable, watch. **ML**





# the singular adventures of the style councillors

THE STYLE COUNCILLORS PLAY THE SINGLES OF THE STYLE COUNCIL

FRI 11 JAN GLASGOW ORAN MOR	FRI 15 FEB HARPENDEN PUBLIC HALLS	FRI 08 MARCH SHEFFIELD PLUG EARTH
SAT 12 JAN EDINBURGH LA BELLE ANGELE	SAT 16 FEB BRIGHTON PATTERNS	SAT 09 MARCH HULL, THE WELLY
FRI 18 JAN DOVER THE BOOKING HALL	FRI 01 MARCH BRISTOL THE FIDDLERS	FRI 22 MARCH LONDON, 229
SAT 19 JAN DARTFORD THE MICK JAGGER CENTRE	SAT 02 MARCH GLOUCESTER GUILD HALL	SAT 23 MARCH SOUTHEND CHINNERY'S

# 4KIDZ

INTO THE VALLEY  
40TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR

FRI 25 JAN	OXFORD, TOWN HALL
SAT 26 JAN	COVENTRY, THE EMPIRE
FRI 01 FEB	CAMBRIDGE, JUNCTION
SAT 02 FEB	NORWICH, WATERFRONT
FRI 08 FEB	NORTHAMPTON, ROADMENDER
SAT 09 FEB	DERBY, THE VENUE
FRI 15 FEB	SWANSEA, SIN CITY
SAT 16 FEB	SOUTHAMPTON, THE BROOK
FRI 22 FEB	SOUTHEND, CHINNERY'S
SAT 23 FEB	GLOUCESTER, GUILDHALL



# MATT BIANCO



LONDON  
ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL  
FRIDAY 08 FEBRUARY

# CORDUROY

THE RETURN OF THE FABRIC FOUR TOUR 2019

THU 21 MAR BIRMINGHAM HARE & HOUNDS	FRI 12 APR MANCHESTER CLUB ACADEMY
FRI 22 MAR NORTHAMPTON ROADMENDER	SAT 13 APR GLASGOW GARAGE 2
SAT 23 MAR NOTTINGHAM THE LOFT	SUN 14 APR EDINBURGH VOODOO ROOMS
THU 04 APR NORWICH ARTS CENTRE	FRI 19 APR NEWCASTLE THE CLUNY
FRI 05 APR MARGATE DREAMLAND	SAT 20 APR YORK FIBBERS
SAT 06 APR GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL	THU 25 APR OXFORD BULLINGTON
SUN 07 APR BRISTOL FIDDLERS	FRI 26 APR LONDON 229
THU 11 APR LEEDS THE WARDROBE	SAT 27 APR SOUTHEND CHINNERY'S



# BLANCMANGE

'wanderlust' tour

26 apr	southend	chinnerys
27 apr	london	under the bridge
03 may	sheffield	the leadmill
04 may	liverpool	arts club
10 may	manchester	gorilla
11 may	birmingham	hare & hounds

# jody watley

WED 17 APRIL	GLASGOW	ORAN MOR
THU 18 APRIL	MANCHESTER	GORILLA
FRI 19 APRIL	LONDON	UNDER THE BRIDGE



NEW SHOW FOR 2019

# THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD SHOW



## ALL THAT YOU LOVE WORLD TOUR 2019

FEATURING CLASSICS FROM THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON,  
WISH YOU WERE HERE, ANIMALS, THE WALL AND MORE...

### NOVEMBER 2019

FRI	01	HARROGATE CONVENTION CENTRE
SAT	02	EDINBURGH USHER HALL
SUN	03	ABERDEEN MUSIC HALL
TUE	05	OXFORD NEW THEATRE
WED	06	MARGATE WINTER GARDENS
FRI	08	CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
SAT	09	BIRMINGHAM ARENA
SUN	10	MILTON KEYNES THEATRE
TUE	12	LLANDUDNO VENUE CYMRU
WED	13	IPSWICH REGENT THEATRE
FRI	15	HALIFAX VICTORIA THEATRE
SAT	16	GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO
SUN	17	LIVERPOOL ECHO ARENA
MON	18	SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION
WED	20	READING HEXAGON
THU	21	BATH FORUM
FRI	22	BRIGHTON CENTRE
SAT	23	PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS
MON	25	LONDON ROYAL ALBERT HALL
WED	27	STOKE REGENT
THU	28	SHEFFIELD CITY HALL
FRI	29	NEWCASTLE CITY HALL
SAT	30	MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO

### DECEMBER 2019

MON	02	GUILDFORD G LIVE
TUE	03	LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
THU	05	CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
FRI	06	NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL
SAT	07	BOURNEMOUTH INTL CENTRE

# SQUEEZE

THE DIFFORD AND TILBROOK SONGBOOK 2019

plus  
special  
guests

## HEAVEN 17

### OCTOBER

THU	17	SCUNTHORPE Baths Hall
FRI	18	SHEFFIELD City Hall
SAT	19	GATESHEAD Sage
MON	21	GLASGOW Royal Concert Hall
TUE	22	LEICESTER De Montfort Hall
WED	23	BIRMINGHAM Symphony Hall
FRI	25	OXFORD New Theatre
SAT	26	BRIGHTON Centre
SUN	27	SOUTHEND Cliffs Pavilion
TUE	29	LONDON Royal Albert Hall
WED	30	BATH Forum

### NOVEMBER

FRI	01	HULL City Hall
SAT	02	LIVERPOOL Philharmonic
SUN	03	SALFORD The Lowry
TUE	05	NORTHAMPTON Derngate
WED	06	GUILDFORD G Live
SAT	09	NOTTINGHAM Royal Concert Hall
MON	11	BOURNEMOUTH Pavilion
TUE	12	CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange
WED	13	CARDIFF St David's Hall
FRI	15	LLANDUDNO Venue Cymru
SAT	16	HARROGATE Convention Centre
SUN	17	READING Hexagon
TUE	19	FOLKESTONE Leas Cliff Hall
WED	20	IPSWICH Regent



## BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!

# ABC

the  
Lexicon  
of Love

The classic album performed in its  
entirety plus their other greatest hits,  
with the Southbank Sinfonia  
conducted by Anne Dudley

### April 2019

Sunday	07	Southend Cliffs Pavilion
Monday	08	Bournemouth Pavilion Theatre
Tuesday	09	Birmingham Symphony Hall
Thursday	11	Gateshead Sage
Friday	12	Manchester Bridgewater Hall
Saturday	13	Sheffield City Hall
Monday	15	Brighton Dome
Tuesday	16	London Royal Albert Hall

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© Dave Freak

## HEAVEN 17 O2 INSTITUTE, BIRMINGHAM

17 NOVEMBER



HEAVEN 17 ROLL BACK THE YEARS TO REVIVE THEIR BIGGEST-SELLING ALBUM – YOU KNOW, THE ONE WITH *TEMPTATION* ON IT...

Playing their 35-year-old album *The Luxury Gap* in chronological order, you'd think Heaven 17 would know what comes next. But not so. "This is *We Live So Fast!*" introduces vocalist Glenn Gregory, only to be swiftly corrected by synth maestro Martyn Ware as the duo, augmented by a keyboard player and backing singers, kick into *Lady Ice And Mr Hex*. Gregory wanders off in shame, much to the amusement of both audience and colleagues, yet swiftly bounces back with all the energy of his 25-year-old self.

Having previously marked the anniversary of their debut LP, *Penthouse And Pavement*, Ware and Gregory now turn their attention to their second studio album that firmly established them in the pop firmament. Whereas its predecessor was a game of two halves (funk side

and synth side), its follow-up has no such divisions, delivering a level field of lyrical and musical sophistication that Ware's former cohorts over in The Human League would never achieve.

Against an exotic sunset/industrial backdrop adapted from the cover artwork, the five-piece make an instant impact with the clattering *Crushed By The*

*Wheels Of Industry*. Gregory's grinning never stops over the entire 100-minute show and even Ware, in a distinctive jacket that looks like it was procured from an over-sized Munchkin, can't help but beam. They know they're onto a winner.

Dropping a huge *Temptation* just five tunes in, Gregory says he wanted to jumble *The Luxury*

Gap's tracklisting but was overruled ("we'd normally do this at the end!" he cries). Meanwhile, Ware introduces a stomping *We Live So Fast* as their tribute to Giorgio Moroder ("that's a fuckin' workout!" gasps Gregory at the end), before the arrival of the LP's final cut, *The Best Kept Secret* – an orchestral ballad of almost John Barry-ambition.

"Thanks, goodnight!" quips Gregory, *The Luxury Gap* concluded. But the night's only halfway through as Ware delves into his League days for the stark minimalism of *Circus Of Death*, *Crow And A Baby*, and the beefy *Being Boiled* (played on the original vintage synth it was written on).

Stripped of the busy bass work of the original, *Penthouse And Pavement* sounds more proto-House than white boy funk, while H17's *I'm Your Money* echoes early League numbers. The real curveball, however, comes as Gregory is joined by Claudia Brücken from support act xPropaganda for *When Your Heart Runs Out Of Time* – the first time they've performed the *Insignificance* soundtrack duet since the 1985 video shoot. But the night's not over 'til the 1992 remix of *Temptation* has the entire crowd dancing. Ending on a high, Heaven 17 played to win, and win they did. **Dave Freak**

### SETLIST

- 1 Crushed By The Wheels Of Industry
- 2 Who'll Stop The Rain
- 3 Let Me Go
- 4 Key To The World
- 5 Temptation
- 6 Come Live With Me
- 7 Lady Ice And Mr Hex
- 8 We Live So Fast
- 9 The Best Kept Secret
- 10 Circus Of Death

- 11 Crow And A Baby
- 12 Being Boiled
- 13 (We Don't Need This) Fascist Groove Thang
- 14 I'm Your Money
- 15 Play To Win
- 16 Penthouse And Pavement

### ENCORE

- 17 When Your Heart Runs Out Of Time
- 18 Temptation (1992 Remix)





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# RICK ASTLEY EVENTIM HAMMERSMITH APOLLO, LONDON

8 NOVEMBER



The renaissance of Rick Astley has been one of the most heartwarming career revivals of the past decade, especially because his comeback albums *50* and *Beautiful Life* have finally given him more songs actually worthy of his voice.

Astley is also hilariously aware of his status in pop, which makes him entertaining in concert even when ploughing through some of his lesser tunes. And there were a few too many of those on his biggest solo headline show since the 80s. At 105 minutes, it exposed both how vacuous some of the hits were first time round and that not everything on his return has been golden.

*She Wants To Dance With Me* may have reached No.6 in 1988, but even if you were being waterboarded you wouldn't be able to recall its chorus, and that's while Astley is singing it. Shrugging ballad *Rise Up*, meanwhile, is no way to start an encore. Cut out 20 minutes of such longeurs, and it would have tightened Astley's show up no end.

He should definitely keep most of his chat, which has a genuine charm most singers would kill for. Urging the crowd to their feet for *Together Forever* near the start, he implores: "Maybe I can get you in the mood with something

from THE EIGHTIES?" before telling everyone to sit down again after, admitting: "We're of an age. Don't worry, I've paced the set around you – there'll be ups, there'll be downs, I'll have a hot drink."

Only once does the joking get out of hand, when he self-sabotages a decent cover of Daft Punk's *Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger* by mocking his vocoder-treated vocals. It's a skit that starts to drag, as Astley robotically intones: "It's gone a bit Butlins."

When he's not clowning around, Astley can do serious showmanship equally well. The title track of *Beautiful Life* is exactly the kind of moving ballad that Astley should be doing now, while main set-closer *Shivers* is a welcome return to his disco roots

with a better groove than Stock, Aitken & Waterman gave him for most of his early days.

There's only one song it could possibly end on, of course. And with an "Are you ready to sing, you buggers?" it's five minutes of *Never Gonna Give You Up* to unite even the partners dragged along reluctantly into singing along.

Astley is the ghost of George Ezra's future, to the extent that he superbly pulls off a soundalike cover of *Shotgun*, segued into Paul Simon's *You Can Call Me Al*. If Ezra is in such good form in 30 years' time, he'll have done alright for himself. Next time he tours, Astley should have built up enough good songs to have a show worthy of the running time.

**John Earls**

## SETLIST

- 1 Try
- 2 This Old House
- 3 Together Forever
- 4 It Would Take A Strong Man
- 5 Keep Singing
- 6 Whenever You Need Somebody
- 7 She Wants To Dance With Me/Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger
- 8 Beautiful Life

- 9 She Makes Me
- 10 Hold Me In Your Arms
- 11 Last Night On Earth
- 12 Shotgun/You Can Call Me Al
- 13 Cry For Help
- 14 The Good Old Days
- 15 Angels On My Side
- 16 Shivers

## Encore

- 17 Rise Up
- 18 Dance
- 19 Never Gonna Give You Up



**BLANCMANGE**  
ROBIN 2, BILSTON,  
WOLVERHAMPTON

22 NOVEMBER



Blancmange's second headline tour in a year sees sole survivor Neil Arthur's reconstituted and beefed-up combo turn their attention to the recently released *Wanderlust* – Arthur's fifth Blancmange album in four years, and his sixth since co-founder Stephen Luscombe's retirement.

Whereas the earlier *Unfurnished Rooms* jaunt saw the vocalist flanked by a keyboard player and guitarist, this time it's keys and electronic percussion, adding a heavier beat to several tracks. That punch is particularly apparent in *I Can't Explain*.

Originally the opener of 1982's debut album *Happy Families*, tonight's version takes 2013's *Happy Families Too...* revision, and ups the tension.

While the electro backing keeps the audience swaying, Arthur's skill as a wordsmith shouldn't be overlooked. Most obvious in the almost spoken word tracks, his casual conversational delivery sees seemingly normal banter descending into strangeness.

A fine example is the nicely observed *Unfurnished Rooms* stand-out *What's The Time?*. Instilling the humdrum with drama and humour, the smooth-toned singer chats over whispering synth. "What's your favourite crime? What's the best indie record of all time?" he questions before amping up the ridiculousness and gesturing to the crowd: "Who's the ugliest person, the most obese, the thinnest, the tallest, the most invisible? List all the things you've never said..." It's a trick Arthur returns to for *Commuter 23's* tougher *Last Night (I Dreamt I Had A Job)*, pondering employment through a haze of prescription drugs and cardboard boxes against a taut minimalist fog.

While a few sound issues interrupt the flow tonight, it's clear Arthur's creative renaissance shows no sign of waning. The 21st century Blancmange is more than just dessert, they're a banquet in their own right. **Dave Freak**



JANUARY 2019  
**CLASSIC  
POP**  
BEST LIVE SHOW



© Naomi Dryden-Smith

## JOHNNY MARR O2 INSTITUTE, BIRMINGHAM

5 NOVEMBER



"The weekend starts here!" cries Johnny Marr from the stage, on an otherwise dull Monday night. There's no argument from the capacity crowd, just plenty of air-punching – Friday night it is, then... It's taken mop-topped Marr a while to step into the spotlight as a solo artist. When The Smiths sank in 1987, Marr established a career as an accomplished sideman and gun for hire. He's strummed with 'em all, from Bryan Ferry and The Pretenders, to The The and more recently, Modest Mouse, The Cribs and film composer Hans Zimmer.

Side-stepping the false start of 2003's *Boomslang* with The Healers, it's only in the last few years that the indie Jeff Beck has finally committed to solo-dom, dropping the Top 10 *The Messenger* in 2013, followed by *Playland* a year later. There's been much musing over Marr's late blooming, though, having cut his teeth pre-Smiths as a frontman, he clearly had the chops to lead, but cites a stream of far more interesting collaborations as preventing him from going alone. Until recently.

Silhouetted against a flood of coloured lights, throwing his guitar skyward and machine-gunning the audience, Marr appears supremely comfortable

centre stage. And so he should be. This year's *Call The Comet* is his best yet, and forms the bedrock of tonight's killer set.

A thumping *The Tracers* opens, followed by the cream of the album: the Smiths-esque *Hi Hello*, the chiming *Rise*, plus the pulsating electronic toms of *New Dominions*, and the storming Cult-like rocker, *Hey Angel*.

Keeping the audience on their toes, recent B-side *Jeopardy* is a surprise at track three, while the album's restrained *Walk Into The Sea* comes halfway into a set that's almost strong enough not to warrant any 80s/90s oldies.

But several well-placed classics (of course) appear, greeted by emotional, even tearful, cheers: Electronic's *Getting Away With It* and *Get The Message*, plus

*Bigmouth Strikes Again*, *The Headmaster Ritual*, *Last Night I Dreamt That Somebody Loved Me*, *There Is A Light That Never Goes Out*, and a majestic *How Soon Is Now?*.

And while few can match Morrissey's vocal delivery, especially in his prime, Marr assuredly reclaims those Smiths tunes as his own.

The classics will ensure Marr always has an audience, but tonight he proves he doesn't necessarily need to rest on those laurels, as with *Call The Comet*, he's finally made the album fans knew he had in him.

Shame it's taken him this long, but, hey, (to quote the T-shirt) it's Johnny 'F\*\*\*ing' Marr, isn't it? Worth the wait.

**Dave Freak**

### SETLIST

- 1 The Tracers
- 2 Bigmouth Strikes Again
- 3 Jeopardy
- 4 Day In Day Out
- 5 New Dominions
- 6 Hi Hello
- 7 The Headmaster Ritual
- 8 Walk Into The Sea
- 9 Getting Away With It
- 10 Hey Angel
- 11 Last Night I Dreamt That Somebody Loved Me

- 12 Bug
- 13 Get The Message
- 14 Easy Money
- 15 Boys Get Straight
- 16 How Soon Is Now?

### Encore

- 17 Rise
- 18 Spiral Cities
- 19 There Is A Light That Never Goes Out
- 20 You Just Haven't Earned It Yet, Baby

**MS. LAURYN HILL**  
ARENA, BIRMINGHAM

27 NOVEMBER



On the road to mark 20 years since her landmark album *The Miseducation Of Lauryn Hill*, reports from the former Fugee's earlier tour dates have been mixed at best, marred by late arrivals, seriously truncated sets and even booing.

With no stage times announced (a good idea given Hill's s'posed tardiness), Cory Henry And The Funk Apostles cause a stir with a solid set of quality jazz funk, with keyboard player/vocalist Henry's Prince-like deconstruction of the Bee Gees' *Stayin' Alive* a highpoint. We have to wait 'til 10pm before Ms Hill finally makes her entrance.

Released in 1998, *The Miseducation Of...* is one of the era's great albums. As Hill tells it, as a twenty-something new mother, surrounded by negativity, she fled to Jamaica to realise her vision of a record that blended old-school soul with contemporary, socially-conscious hip-hop.

Her set starts strongly with *Last Ones*, *Everything Is Everything*, and The Doors' *Light My Fire*. Those expecting banter and singalong renditions are left disappointed as the flamboyant band leader plays up the original material's dynamic qualities, gesturing to musicians and reeling out rhymes with barely a pause for breath. There's no compromise, no pandering – this ain't showbiz. Twenty years on, Hill's voice is a little huskier, less constrained, while tracks such as *When It Hurts So Bad* are heavier, more muscular, a squall of runs and fills.

At times, such workouts become too much, and you long for her to step back, keep it simple, yet there's no denying the consistency or strength of the performances.

But time marches on, and as 11.30pm looms, everything comes to an abrupt end as *Killing Me Softly* drops, arena lights flash on and punters flee *en masse* for transport home – some clearly disappointed, confused, angry; yet others inspired, uplifted and moved to tears. Much like Hill's own on-stage description of the album, tonight's show "honoured the past, walked in the present, and looked to the future," and those who understood that were justly rewarded; those who didn't vented on social media. Whatever your perspective, it was certainly an education. **Dave Freak**



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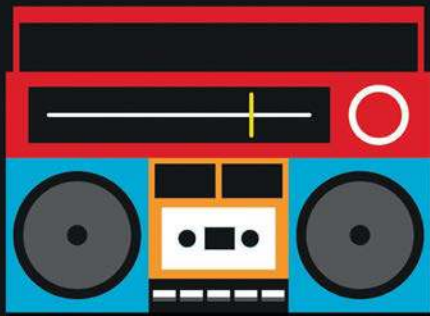
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# CLASSIC POP MOMENTS



## No.48 DAVID BOWIE INTRODUCES THE SNOWMAN CHRISTMAS 1984

Lasting just 37 seconds, David Bowie's introduction to festive classic *The Snowman* was a blink-and-you'll-miss-it affair. Often overlooked in favour of his appearance in Jim Henson's *Labyrinth*, this low-key piece to camera at the start of the Raymond Briggs animated treat is really rather sweet. Bowie wasn't in the original 1982 version of the 26-minute short film – the lesser-known Briggs gave his own intro to that – but the star was invited to appeal to the US market on subsequent showings in 1984. Set in an attic room, Bowie finds a blue scarf given to him by the titular snowman. He's the boy in the cartoon, all grown up. Two years later, Bowie provided the title track to Briggs' powerful anti-nuclear animated feature *When The Wind Blows*.





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